Vol. XIV. No. 3 SPRING, 1947

SCRUTINY

A Quarterly Review

Edited by

D. W. HARDING F. R. LEAVIS

L. C. KNIGHTS W. H. MELLERS

CONTENTS

Page

ANDRE MALRAUX AND HIS CRITICS, by *H. A. Mason* 162

THE CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS OF PLANNING AND POPULARIZATION, by *G. H. Bantock* 171

THE NOVEL AS DRAMATIC POEM (I): 'HARD TIMES', by *F. R. Leavis* 185

PROFESSOR CHADWICK AND ENGLISH STUDIES, by *A Pupil* 204

CORRESPONDENCE 209

COMMENTS AND REVIEWS 211

REHABILITATING IBSEN, *Ibsen: the Intellectual Background* and *Ibsen the Norwegian*, reviewed by R. G. Cox (p. 211). ROOM FOR DOUBT? MR. BOTTRALL'S SELECTED POEMS, *Selected Poems*, reviewed by H. A. Mason (p. 217). HENRY JAMES: THE STORIES, *Fourteen Stories by Henry James*, reviewed by Q. D. Leavis (p. 223). THE APPRECIATION OF HENRY JAMES, *Henry James: the Major Phase*, reviewed by F. R. Leavis (p. 229). ENGLISH CHAMBER MUSIC, reviewed by W.H.M. (p. 237). *Secret Chromatic Art in the Netherlands Motet*, reviewed by W.H.M. (p. 238). GRAMOPHONE RECORDS, reviews by W. H. Mellers (p. 239).

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ANDRE MALRAUX AND HIS CRITICS

A NOTE ON THE STATE OF LITERARY CRITICISM IN FRANCE

IN the course of a wireless talk given to Germany in March, 1946 (the English original text is given in the April-June number of *The Adelphi*), Mr. Eliot illustrated his remarks by a reference to the history of *The Criterion*. 'In starting *The Criterion* I had the aim of bringing together the best in new thinking and new writing in its time, from all the countries of Europe that had anything to contribute to the common good . . . I sought therefore first to find out who were the best writers, unknown or little known outside their own country, whose work deserved to be known more widely. Second, I tried to establish relations with those literary periodicals abroad, the aims of which corresponded most nearly to my own'. Mr. Eliot names the French, German, Swiss, Spanish and Italian journals with which *The Criterion* maintained connections. It might be interesting to enquire what European periodicals nowadays could bear a similar relation to *Scrutiny*. Visitors to Germany report the great desire of editors there to see 'European' periodicals refounded. The few German periodicals I have seen, however, suffer too much from the chaotic conditions against which they are struggling to be of more than local interest.

When we turn to France the problem is one of number; I have counted more than fifteen *monthlies* (excluding merely regional or occasional reviews) most of which are as large as and many more than twice the size of *Scrutiny*, each provided with its own staff of critics. A careful examination of this mass of critical writing would yield surprising results. At least I was surprised to discover how little help could be derived from the French literary press when I had occasion to comb it for articles on Albert Camus. This absence of strict literary criticism is not a post-war phenomenon. I should say from memory that a study of the back numbers of the *N.R.F.* for the years preceding 1939 would yield very little that could be offered as a model of critical relevance.

Mild research of this kind points to a problem of some importance and raises doubts about the quality of the immense interest in letters shown in France to-day. Clearly only a large-scale investigation could do justice to the problem and, I suspect, first-hand knowledge of what goes on in editorial offices is necessary to explain many features of the literary press. A revised and more comprehensive work than M. Duhamel's *In Defence of Letters* (*cf. Scrutiny* Vol. VII, No. 3, p. 336) would be of great service. But

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

even as things are, certain aspects of the problem are open to a cursory glance. One of the most striking features of the French literary world is the almost universal respect in which American novelists are held. The translations of Faulkner, Hemingway, Caldwell, Dos Passos and Steinbeck, which began to appear in the 'thirties, have been the most important events in contemporary French literary history. I have no statistics, but a glance at any publisher's catalogue shows the preponderance of American novels over the native product. The leading French writers themselves introduce these novels or comment on them at length in periodicals. M. Sartre reports that 'two thirds of the manuscripts which young writers submit to the review which I direct are written à la Caldwell, à la Hemingway, à la Dos Passos'.

The influence of politics on literature is as strong now as ever in French history. The Marxist debate which occupied and exhausted the English literary world in the pre-war years is still being fought out in French periodicals. For a parallel to the form taken by some of the discussions we must look to Russia rather than to England or America. The pattern of the debate is familiar. In the years before the war we witnessed the Gide exhibition. For a post-war variant we might select the literary squabbles centring round André Malraux. Many literary Communists greeted his earlier novels as admirable instruments in the service of the Cause and Malraux himself seems for a time to have made an effort to write suitable left-wing literature, in *Le Temps du Mépris*, for instance. During the war, however, he parted company with the Communists and is now (I hear) closely allied to de Gaulle. Consequently (one can't help feeling) he has become the target for a good deal of abuse from Communist *literary* critics.

A few excerpts from an article by Claude Morgan (*Lettres Françaises* 17-1-47) will give the tone of the debate. M. Morgan is replying to readers who had written to enquire why he was always attacking Malraux, 'an author, who, whatever you say, is after all a great left-wing writer'. He admits that such is the general opinion, but claims that Malraux only acquired this reputation because in his search for adventure, and adventure in which he himself could play a leading part, he happened for a time to turn to the left. The real Malraux, he insinuates, is the biographer and would-be ape of T. E. Lawrence, the minister in de Gaulle's cabinet. Malraux showed himself in his true colours, says M. Morgan, when he told the students of the Sorbonne in a discussion of tradition that 'le vrai problème n'est pas celui de la transmission des cultures dans leur spécificité', but 'de savoir comment la qualité d'humanité que portrait chaque culture est arrivée jusqu'à nous, et ce qu'elle est devenue pour nous'. The phrase in this speech which inflamed the Communists was, 'il est profondément indifférent, pour qui que ce soit d'entre vous, étudiants, d'être communiste, anti-communiste, libéral, ou quoi que ce soit (these words provoked an uproar) parce que le seul problème véritable est de savoir, au-dessus de ces structures, sous quelle forme

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nous pouvons recréer l'homme'. M. Morgan concludes his article with, 'je ne puis comprendre qu'ayant reçu de telles preuves de sa véritable nature, il se trouve encore, en France ou ailleurs, un seul intellectuel de gauche pour revendiquer Malraux'.

If we turn to England we can find the substance of M. Morgan's article in *A Note on André Malraux* by Walter Allen:[1] who writes 'The framework of the stories, the Chinese communist revolution, for instance, is merely the machinery . . . which enables the . . . (personal) . . . myth to be played out'. Where he differs from M. Morgan is in showing that this is merely one of the facts about the novels and thus part of the material on which literary criticism has to work, but not in itself grounds for praise or blame. It is a matter for regret that Mr. Allen did not expand his note. His remarks on *La Condition Humaine* are not full enough to give weight to his verdict: 'It is, quite simply, a great novel. That it happens to be set in a communist revolution is entirely fortuitous'.

A determined scrutiny of the French literary press in which the Malraux quarrel was developed in all directions would, I think, bear out the contention that very little of the French literary intelligence is concerned with evaluating literary works, that necessary distinctions, such as that between the author and his work, between the 'message' that can be abstracted from the remarks of any one character in a novel and the total effect of the novel in which the character 'appears', the elementary distinctions without which criticism of fiction cannot function, are thrown overboard when the reviewer sits down to write his article. An examination of the two most recent books about André Malraux[2] by representative critics is offered here as a gesture towards such a scrutiny and as part of the evidence for my unfavourable verdict. M. Picon's book was very well received in the press and is referred to with respect by M. Mauriac. This article was written before any reviews of M. Mauriac's book could be obtained.

M. Mauriac lays down a critical principle in his preface which very largely explains most of his and his contemporaries' practice. If he had been dealing with a dead author or one incapable of further development, M. Mauriac says he would have tried to find 'une idée centrale qui éclaire et ordonne l'oeuvre dans son ensemble'. This is apparently what he has done in previous books dealing with Marcel Jouhandeau and Jean Cocteau. I have not read these books, but it seems incredible to me that any group of novels

---

[1]This note appeared in *Focus No. 2* 'a serial miscellany concerned chiefly with the criticism of contemporary writing. Issues are arranged as far as possible on a writer, group of writers, or a literary theme'. I quote the blurb since the intention expressed is admirable. The contributors, however, have not sufficiently thrashed out the fundamentals of any approach and so have no real common ground.

[2]*André Malraux*, by Gaëtan Picon, Gallimard, Paris, 1945, 70 frs. *Malraux ou Le Mal du Héros*, by Claude Mauriac, 1946, 150 frs.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

forming a body of literary work could be subsumed under a single general idea without a degree of abstraction which would involve abandoning the quiddity of the novels and the individual features of each which make it what it is. Fiction does not offer a number of ideas that can be organized and arranged in this way. The attempt to find such a central idea can only succeed if one ignores what I have called elementary distinctions.

M. Mauriac also feels he should apologize for the numerous quotations from Malraux's works which appear in his pages. In defending their presence he claims that by juxtaposing quotations from different novels the author's 'secrets' can be discovered. 'Ce qu'il n'avait pas su, ou ce qu'il n'avait pas osé dire, risquera sans doute d'être formulé, mais l'accent sera mis par cela même sur le sens profond de son oeuvre dont une partie de la richesse cachée verra ainsi le jour pour la première fois. Telle est l'utilité de la critique et sa dignité'. Further, for M. Mauriac, a novelist draws *conclusions* and these conclusions can sometimes be illuminated by what other writers have written on the 'same' subject. Finally, a point which throws some light on what is expected of a French literary critic, M. Mauriac writes: 'Je sais qu'une oeuvre dans laquelle on ne trouve pas de références paraît facilement plus originale et qu'on loue alors l'écrivain de ne rien donner qui ne soit de son cru: mais il me paraît beaucoup plus important d'être exact que brillant et je sacrifie volontiers ma vanité d'auteur s'il s'agit d'accroître ma récolte ou seulement de m'en assurer. Il reste qu'on peut mériter, à force de travail, de ne plus citer: dans une quinzaine d'années, peut-être, me sera-t-il accordé, de consacrer à Malraux un essai où l'on ne trouvera pas deux guillemets'.

The reader will have no difficulty in imagining what kind of criticism to expect from such principles. As an instance of the 'secrets' that can be wrung from the author by the quotation method, M. Mauriac notes that Tchen in *La Condition Humaine* repeats the gesture of self-mutilation each time he is about to murder. M. Malraux himself draws the reader's attention to the repetition. M. Mauriac supposes that André Malraux unconsciously found himself repeating the act and added the comment drawing attention to the repetition . . . afterwards. M. Mauriac's reasons for this hypothesis are revealing: 'Elle (the repeated act) se trouvait dans la ligne du personnage, c'est-a-dire dans celle de l'auteur. Car Malraux n'est pas de ces romanciers qui créent des héros vivant d'une autre existence que la leur'.

Now it is indeed a fact that André Malraux does not succeed in distancing his main characters or in making credible those characters that do not stand in some very close relation to what appear to be his main interests. It is possible to isolate and point to local failures in projection. But the further step of equating author and character seems to me not justified, at least as long as we are confined to the discipline of criticism. By ignoring the distinction M. Mauriac finds himself filling nearly half his book with an account of the nature of the sexual abnormality which he attributed to Malraux

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

on the strength of scattered references throughout the novels. Once again he is pushing the evidence too far. There is no doubt that M. Malraux nowhere communicates a strong feeling for normal love and nowhere allows us to suppose that he condemns as worthless or vile the perversions he dowers his characters with. It is true that there are passages where atrocious acts and scenes are introduced without seeming to be an inevitable part of the pattern. Yet the step taken by M. Mauriac leads him straight out of literary criticism. Once this looseness is admitted, it is not surprising to find Malraux described as a triumphant amalgam of D. H. Lawrence and his namesake, the Colonel.

> 'J'ai souvent rêvé que les deux Lawrence auraient gangé à ne faire qu'un: le panthéisme de D-H., tout naturellement, se prolonge en cette étreinte brutale et efficace dont T-E. enserra une terre violentée, tandis que l'action victorieuse de ce dernier, commentée par lui d'un point de vue encore un peu trop intellectuel, eût gagné à tenir plus franchement compte de ces forces cosmiques auxquelles l'auteur de *L'Amant de Lady Chatterley* avait arraché quelques uns de leurs secrets. Aussi bien, une oeuvre existe-t-elle, une oeuvre d'homme doublée d'une oeuvre d'écrivain, dans laquelle les enseignements des deux Lawrence viennent se fondre: celle d'André Malraux'.

An unexpected by-product of this undignified and useless kind of writing is that the collection of 'parallel' passages brings out the failure of André Malraux to develop. It also reveals to what an extent Malraux is merely an intellectual, that is, a man who formulates general propositions in the abstract and fails to dissolve them in the concrete of the literary work. That so much can be said about Malraux by M. Mauriac's method is, in a word, a radical criticism of Malraux as an artist. A criticism not made explicit by M. Mauriac. This is not surprising, since M. Mauriac makes it clear that he is not interested in the novels, but in discovering through them what he imagines to be Malraux's private thoughts. This has long been a disagreeable trait of French criticism. The following passage is quite explicit:

> 'Après les épopées de héros uniques et solitaires, le Garine des *Conquérants*, le Perken de la *Voie Royale*, il en est venu avec *La Condition Humaine* et *L'Espoir* à des romans plus complexes où il essaye de présenter dans leurs mutuels rapports de nombreux personnages d'origines et de conditions diverses. Garine, c'était Malraux; et Perken, Malraux: des Malraux sublimisée, stylisés, passés à l'état de mythes. Mais Kyo, Ferral, Tchen, Katow; mais Manuel, Garcia, tous les personnages de quelque importance de *La Condition Humaine* ou de *L'Espoir*, ce sont encore et toujours Malraux, D'où une certaine confusion que nous empêche de toujours exactement distinguer les uns des autres ces hommes dont ne diffèrent trop souvent que les noms. Nous ne nous arrêterons pas ici aux conséquences littéraires de cette insuffisante

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

individualisation qui fait, en ce sens, de *L'Espoir* un roman raté. Ce qui compte surtout pour nous, c'est la signification de cet échec sur le plan humain. Nous pressentons alors que *l'autre* hante Malraux dans la mesure où il se révèle incapable de l'atteindre et peut-être même de le concevoir'.

* * * *

M. Picon, too, begins with a flourish of critical principles. His plea is for a kind of criticism that dares to handle living authors. Against Albert Thibaudet[3] he protests that, so far from abandoning modern literature because it has not been sifted, 'ce tri dans la littérature de son époque, n'est-ce point pourtant ce que nous attendons du véritable critique . . . ?' He accuses his contemporary critics of servility and timidity. He remarks with some justice that most books on contemporary literature are nothing but a jungle of names with no attempt to distinguish between significant and insignificant. When a critic does speak up for a contemporary writer, it is an act of friendship, says M. Picon, not an expression of critical judgment. 'Ne serait-il pas opportun que, dans la critique des Lettres, règnent enfin d'autres moeurs?'

M. Picon feels that M. Malraux's generation suffers by comparison with 'la génération royale' which includes Proust, Péguy, Claudel, Apollinaire, Gide, Valéry—'cet âge vraiment classique . . .' (It is time, by the way, that these illustrious reputations were questioned in a serious and responsible spirit). Malraux, he says, is not primarily an artist. 'Si réel, si apparent qu'il soit dans cette oeuvre, l'art n'y est jamais une fin'. Nevertheless he considers Malraux the greatest writer of his generation and one who is *par excellence* our contemporary—'De ce siècle, au sens le plus fort du terme, il mérite d'être appelé le témoin'.

This being so, M. Picon feels unable to judge the novels with detachment. Here, it seems to me, he makes a false distinction which ruins his whole approach. 'C'est dire qu'il existe des oeuvres qui nous offrent des spectacles et d'autres qui proposent des réponses aux problèmes que nous vivons. Celles qui se laissent enfermer dans le domaine de la littérature, et ne prétendent pas être autre chose qu'un objet de contemplation, il est naturel qu'elles ne fassent appel à rien de plus profond en nous que l'émotion et le jugement esthétiques. Mais celles qui s'épanchent hors de la littérature, et reconnaissent les interrogations de l'homme vivant, on comprend qu'elles éveillent des passions à la mesure de celles dont elles témoignent'. All major works of literature invite us to an experience which we are called upon to evaluate to the best of our ability.

---

[3]The editors of Albert Thibaudet's posthumous *Histoire de la littérature française de* 1789 *à nos jours* report: 'Je me sens gêné, nous disait Thibaudet, devant la période actuelle. C'est de la littérature non triée, la perspective change du tout au tout. Je vais me borner à un simple schéma'.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

On the other hand, M. Picon does not surrender entirely to M. Malraux. Malraux represents a significant possibility and a temptation. Malraux is for him what Gide was for an older generation. 'Nous ne pouvons plus choisir notre voie sans tenir compte de la sienne'. Here all that can be done is to register a different valuation. Further debate could only be along lines of wider reference. For M. Picon's approach is at bottom sentimental, not critical. To the Communist taunt referred to earlier in this article M. Picon can only reply, 'Il est déloyal et il est vain de séparer Malraux de ceux avec qui il se veut uni'. He just cannot understand how François Mauriac came to note in his journal: 'le point faible de Malraux, c'est son mépris de l'homme'. But he does not attempt to reinterpret the early novels where this contempt is striking.

One result of this uncritical approach is the disconcerting way passages of vague affirmation alternate with the most damaging admissions. Thus, after writing pages on 'la fraternité virile' as a theme in the novels, M. Picon comes out with, 'Au fond, Malraux est peu sensible à l'individu, peu sensible aussi à la foule'. But since he never relates the passages where this insensibility occurs to those where he detects 'la fraternité virile' in any particular novel, there is no conflict, the two divergent views never really engage. Instead he invites us to admire the *conflit prométhéen* of André Malraux trying to get into touch with the rest of mankind. He nowhere suggests that this failure of Malraux's casts a strange light on the life-long preoccupation with Man.[4]

It is characteristic of the sentimental approach to substitute rhetorical *bravura* for criticism. Here again we touch on a feature common to a great deal of French literary journalism. A large part of M. Picon's book is filled with lyrical passages on the themes that run through Malraux's novels. One of the delicate points in any critical appraisal of Malraux is to determine how to take the recurrent appearances of nihilism. Malraux is fond of using the word *absurde* and his characters often declaim against middle-class society and the nullity of life in general. These attitudes are very often mere verbal exercises because the feelings, etc., referred to are not embodied in an adequate situation. The author may have taken himself very seriously; the point is to determine how seriously these passages can be taken by the reader. It is simply evading criticism to say that Malraux is in the line of Byron and Chateaubriand and leave it at that. The world has changed since the Great Romantics died. To take up their pose to-day is not to be doing what they did. While I am prepared to admit that there may be passages where Malraux's use of the word 'destin' or 'fatalité' does not cover a failure to communicate, I am simply bewildered by the following—a typical quotation and if anything on the mild side:

---

[4] 'Ecrivain, par quoi suis-je obsédé, depuis dix ans, sinon par l'homme?'—*La Lutte avec l'Ange*.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

'Un souffle désertique a passé sur le monde et le laisse calciné. Riche de sa cruelle lucidité et de ses vaines exigences, l'homme est abandonné à l'intolérable. L'oeuvre de Malraux est l'épopée de la Fatalité qui pèse sur l'homme, le long poème d'une descente aux enfers du malheur humaine. Dans des scènes où s'expriment la pire douleur et la pire humiliation, elle nous met impitoyablement en présence de l'absurde de vivre: en présence du néant de l'homme, du néant d'un univers déjà prêt à se refermer sur nos traces et promis lui-même à la dissolution'.

According to M. Picon, Malraux's work is tragic as well as epic. 'Il est aujourd'hui notre premier, sinon notre seul poète tragique: nul ne le contestera'. And yet a few lines later it appears that *grand-guignol* is a possible label. This is another of those sudden let-downs! 'Qu'il y ait chez lui, et singulièrement dans *la Condition humaine*, quelque excès, quelque débauche volontaire dans l'horrible—et un côte, si j'ose dire, "grand-guignol"—il se peut'. On the other hand, Malraux is 'plus proche encore de Corneille que de Barrès' and a few lines later Pascal is brought in and Faulkner turned out. This shuffling round of great names—so frequent in French criticism—may or may not be bluff—it is always pointless as long as no precise indication is given of just what at each moment the great Counter has to stand for.

M. Picon, like M. Mauriac in this, feels obliged to distinguish his hero from the two Existentialists, M. Sartre and M. Camus. He affects to be surprised that people should have found similarities of outlook in the works of these three writers. At first he claims to see no similarity at all, but later whittles down the distinction as follows: the Existentialists fail to communicate any sense of positive values, 'soit qu'il manque à leur pensée d'être véritablement sincère, soit que la nature même de leur art, ce qu'il a d'impersonnel et d'abstrait, leur interdise de les transmettre'. What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. These criteria, if they could be established, might have been used with profit to determine what positive values are successfully communicated in the work of André Malraux.

M. Picon does attempt in a final chapter to regard his hero as an artist. He begins by calling him one of the most intellectual writers in an age of intellectuals. He is also one of the rare critics of our time, and he is a philosopher into the bargain. But his work convinces us, says M. Picon, by its artistic mastery. Here the emptiness of the conventional literary language of appraisal becomes apparent, especially when we come to Malraux's style. M. Picon tries to describe it without once quoting a specimen. We learn that it is 'de l'homme même'—a manly style, not musical or graceful, but powerful, sober and rapid. The whole description might have been written by Quintilian. M. Picot thinks *L'Espoir* stylistically the best of Malraux's books, but not 'le chef-d'oeuvre humain'. There is a musty smell of the schoolroom about this part of the book.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Next comes the vexed question: is Malraux really a novelist? (Here M. Picon makes in passing a point he could have used to advantage: that the import of the book comes out so often in one or more passages of dialogue in each novel, passages which are not essentially related to the action as a whole). He notes that Malraux's work is a mixture of 'lyrisme' and 'reportage', that there is no serious analysis of the thought or motives of the main characters, and no characters that are not versions of Malraux himself. Yet he says, 'Techniquement, *la Condition humaine* est un chef-d'oeuvre classique où se retrouvent la complexité et les équilibres d'une tragédie d'Eschyle ou de Racine'. This classical perfection is, however, something Malraux must be excused for. M. Picon tries to show that though it may not equal the brilliant new techniques of Joyce, Faulkner or Steinbeck, the classical method suits Malraux's way of thinking.

M. Picon's conclusion is that 'ce que Malraux apporte à la littérature de son siècle relève plus de l'art de l'écrivain que de l'art du romancier. Cette force de vision, ce mouvement et cette fièvre du style, ils sont d'un poète. Cette présence impérieuse de lui-même, qui nous impose tour à tour son exaltation et son angoisse, ce n'est pas la marque du romancier qui cherche à s'effacer derrière ses personnages: c'est le signe indiscutable de l'auteur de confessions ou de mémoires, qui, alors même qu'il invente, ne peut que se raconter. La respiration métaphysique, les horizons intellectuels de cette oeuvre restreignent son fond anecdotique,—le fond essentiel du roman. Ce sens de la grandeur, enfin, cette exaltation héroique, —ils appartiennent moins au roman qu'à d'autres genres: l'épopée, la tragédie. Mais qu'importe? Il ne s'agit pas de savoir si une oeuvre obéit aux lois du genre dont elle croit relever, mais si elle est, oui ou non, une grande oeuvre—si elle existe, ou si elle n'existe pas . . . Peu importe que Malraux ait écrit, peu importe qu'il doive écrite de véritables romans. Il suffit qu'il nous ait donné et qu'il nous promette quelques-uns des grands livres de notre temps'.

* * * *

The last number of *Scrutiny* contained some criticism by Mr. Bentley of its coverage of foreign literature to which Mr. Leavis replied: ' . . . we think we have been less inadequate than he might appear to suggest. But certainly we offer no such "coverage" of Europe and America as *The Criterion* undertook. And it seems to us that if it can't be better done than *The Criterion* did it, then it is hardly worth offering. People, in these matters, are prone to be too easily impressed, and to take the pretension for something real. We, of course, should like to do much more than we have done to help in keeping open the lines of communication with other countries and cultures. But the essential thing, it seems to us, is to maintain standards; except in relation to standards, effectively present, nothing real can be done'.

The selection of criticism presented here with all its limitations and modest claims to be fully representative should serve to

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

corroborate this hesitation to enter into relations which could never be serviceable. Mr. Leavis might have glanced elsewhere than at *The Criterion* to find other examples of the contacts desiderated by Mr. Eliot leading to exchanges profitable perhaps to the individual authors, who see to it that each other's works get translated and published, but not in the long run helpful to the creation of cultural unity.

H. A. MASON.

THE CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS OF PLANNING AND POPULARIZATION

THE immediate occasion of this article[1] is a short pamphlet by Professor Karl Mannheim, *The Meaning of Popularization in a Mass Society* (Supplement to *Christian News Letter* 227). The assumptions on which Professor Mannheim has based his cultural and social ideas are ones that, partly due to his influence, are popular in certain circles to-day, but that nevertheless reveal a reliance on habits of thought that in some ways might appear to have outlived their usefulness. An examination, therefore, of some elements of Professor Mannheim's theories may help us to understand important features of a type of mind that, despite its insufficiency, is exerting an increasing and, to my mind, largely baneful influence on our daily lives. I am also anxious to bring out Professor Mannheim's cultural views because it seems to me that certain intellectual circles are accepting the social conditions of planning and all that it entails without realizing that these changes may have repercussions that would be culturally

[1]This critique was in the editors' hands for publication before Professor Mannheim's death. It is not, then, offered as a general obituary estimate of his work. As its manner shows, it was addressed to a living writer in the hope of eliciting a reply—a hope that, unhappily, is gone. But the critic, who wrote with a deep sense of the present gravity of the issues, still (with the editors) feels that gravity to be no less decisive than it was, and feels also that he could not have put his case more scrupulously than he does here. The editors are convinced that, on matters of such great importance, there is an urgent need for responsible critical thought of this order.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

unfortunate. It may be that in the conflict of loyalties 'culture' will have to go by the board; but it is as well to realize something of what is likely to happen.

But first it will be necessary to consider Professor Mannheim in a wider context. For Professor Mannheim occupies an influential position. Formerly Professor of Sociology in the University of Frankfurt-on-Main, he has recently been connected with the London School of Economics and is now Professor of Education at the University of London. He has brought with him habits of thought derived from a somewhat different mental atmosphere than is to be found in this country—an atmosphere whose characteristic thought movement is from the general to the particular and one which tends to ignore the pettifogging details of 'the stubborn and irreducible' facts of nature at the behest of a more grandiose mental conception of the ideal. It is a viewpoint sanctioned by the Kantian distinction between the empirical and the rational ego. This division (in much German thought) between the outer realm of action and the inner realm of consciousness has led to that fundamental imbalance between the lessons derived from the experience which their great technical efficiency has provided, where all is mechanical obedience, subordination and discipline, and those gained from a feeling of spiritual freedom, of complete intellectual self-determination in the mental sphere. Hence, perhaps—to translate into a common, and because common, significant metaphor—the nation of sleep-walkers, though sleep-walkers whose dreams follow a similar pattern; and hence the incompatibility of the sleep-walker in the domain of the shop-keeper, whose characteristic philosophical expression, from that close association with everyday material objects that buying and selling imply, and from a contemplation of those general laws that the 'state of the market' impels on the attention, lies in an enlightened pragmatism. Yet we are at present witnessing, through the hospitality so rightly extended to foreign refugees, the bringing to bear of just such an alien tradition of outlook on our characteristic English ways of thought, a tradition that serves to stimulate as all new ways of thought are stimulating but one which contains certain dangers unless we realize fully the implications of those new assumptions of use and wont.[1]

For Professor Mannheim is one of the chief exponents of planning in the country and through his own works—particularly his *Man and Society*, published here in 1940—and his general editorship of Kegan Paul's International Library of Sociology and Social Reconstruction, is concerned to persuade us of the necessity of taking this step for the preservation of our way of life. Of course Professor Mannheim is not the first and only planner, and the

[1]This contrast, admittedly based on popular generalizations about national character very properly suspect, nevertheless by its very persistence seems to point to certain endemic qualities to be found in the two nations. The Germans themselves have not been backward in admitting its truth.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

influence, pervasive throughout the 'thirties and increasingly important much earlier, of the rigid systematized thinking of the German Marx, has already prepared many of the intellectuals to listen sympathetically to other thinkers of a similar tendency. Now a plan[2] (a word closely associated with military and scientific operations where the relevant factors are reasonably confined, the resources capable of rational assessment and where there is an immediate, restricted and clearly apprehensible end in view) is always the work of the conscious intellect abstracting from the totality of existence certain only of its characteristics and seeking on a basis of this abstract conception of reality, to realize certain ends. These ends can only be achieved by imposition of means of varying degrees of incompatibility with the living organisms that are the objects of the planner's concern. That any rigid attempt thus to impose means in the larger field of the totality of human society must prove incompatible in this way is certain because no human mind, nor any set of human minds, however able, can adequately assess those imponderables which escape the notice of the cognitive ego in its conscious attempt to fixate the conditions and limitations of being. Even in military matters where, as I say, the end seems to be quite clearly understandable—the need to defeat the enemy—the plan may—and in fact on one side, must—go astray, if not immediately, at any rate (as in the case of Hannibal) in its further consequences. Even the conception of the end in view is subject, of course, to the individual limitations of the

[2]I have only space to subject the small pamphlet quoted above to detailed analysis, and these remarks on planning must be taken in a generalized sense, though they refer to certain features of Professor Mannheim's own schemes. I believe, however, that the whole of Professor Mannheim's work on planning would repay analysis of the type to which the late Professor Susan Stebbing subjected the work of Professors Jeans and Eddington, and E. H. Carr. This, however, would provide matter for a book, not an article. Here I can only commend to the attention the chapter which Professor Mannheim would no doubt regard as an adequate reply to my strictures. It appears in *Man and Society* and is called 'Real understanding of freedom a prelude to action' (*cf.* the comment on the use of the word 'real' below). There we are urged to forego 'the luxury of arbitrary interference' (note the emotively charged words to describe what we would at present refer to as our 'freedom') to attain a 'higher level of freedom' as a result of a contract to establish the plan. But the establishment of a plan seems to me to lead inevitably, despite all the grand talk about 'higher level of freedom' to the type of situation discussed in the later part of this article. Even in Professor Mannheim's own analysis, freedom merely appears as an item in the plan, *i.e.*, we shall apparently be directed when and where to be 'free' ('freedom can only be secured by *direction from the key points*'! *Op. cit.* p. 379—my italics). (One may be permitted a little polite scepticism).

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

planners because of the ultimate imperfection of the human mind. It is perhaps a sign of the inadequacy of Professor Mannheim's outlook that it was not until a friend pointed it out to him that he appears to have realized the existence of the problem, 'Who is to plan the planners?'

Any plan will, in fact, bear witness ultimately to just those values that the planners think desirable. It is characteristic, too, that when Professor Mannheim, in the pamphlet referred to above, turns to define those groups which are to be the sources of original inspiration, the leaders of the dynamic society—presumably the planners themselves—he has to confess that they 'constitute a class which is hardly capable of scientific definition'. And then, more revealingly still, he admits that 'there is no objective measurement that can be applied, and the judgment depends largely upon the personal valuation of the observer'—a statement which seems to me to destroy the whole basis of Professor Mannheim's activities; for we are once more thrown back on the 'chaos' (as Professor Mannheim conceives it) of the liberal era, depending on the clash of individual or group valuations with the additional disadvantage that whichever group comes out on top is presumably to impose its views on the rest. Moreover, such values as the planners can conceive are, if Professor Mannheim's writings are any indication, on a high level of abstraction. The argument is conducted always on an abstract plane, in a vocabulary largely latinate, and the metaphors he employs are frequently derived from science, mechanical things ('mechanism' is a favourite word) and military tactics. A plan, of course, must involve thinking of people in terms of labelled groups, and of the individual only in accordance with those abstract qualities that make him the member of a group, just as a military commander thinks of his men according to their technical capacity as fighting men and not as lovers, fathers, writers of poems, nor as possessing the characteristics of living, developing, organic human beings. Any plan, in fact, implies the imposition of something dead—because abstract and preconceived —on the living organism and may well be related in some way or other to the death wish. Once the attempt is made to put the plan into operation in all its necessary rigidity, the attitude of the planner must be that of Procrustes or else his plan breaks down. Admittedly a certain amount of improvization may be possible, and to give him his due, it is obvious that Professor Mannheim is as anxious to preserve what he calls 'democratic freedom' as words will permit. What he does not appear to see is that the planner is bound up with the logic of his own position. Once improvization passes a certain mark the plan disappears and the end in view suffers a considerable mutation: we are then back, in fact, in the old *laissez-faire* habit of patching which is just what the planner wishes to avoid. Improvization therefore is only possible within certain strict limits, however well-intentioned the planner may be. Hence the necessity to the planned economy of the concentration camp. Professor Mannheim expresses it:

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

'It (*i.e.*, planning) is not the treatment of symptoms but an attack on the strategic points, fully realizing the result'.

The clinical and military metaphors are significant and the satisfying sense of a comprehensiveness in assault which can so easily degenerate into ruthlessness, is to be noted. It is however just that inability of the human mind to assess fully the result that vitiates the planner's claim to omniscience.

Again, it is interesting to note that the planner adds one more to those schemes of a material Utopia that have replaced the older idea of pie-in-the-sky by the promise of a whole pastrycook's shop round the corner at the price of submission to the impersonality of the plan. A further aspect of the plan's appeal lies in the fact that it is associated with that wish to control the future which has been one of the most potent manifestations in Western thought of the individual's desire to perpetuate himself as a protection against the disintegration of time. But in this case there is a significant twist; the individual finds his protection in the future of the community and in the anonymity that that implies; responsibility for the future is pushed on to the impersonal forces involved in the proper working of society that the plan implies, and is to a considerable extent removed from the care of the individual. It is interesting, though perhaps a trifle unfair to Professor Mannheim, to compare the planner's brand of futurity with that of the Macbeths. Lady Macbeth also had the same desire to grasp the future:

> Thy letters have transported me beyond
> This ignorant present, and I feel now
> The future in the instant.

Now this conquest of the future can be conceived of in two ways; at the one extreme the individual can assert his individual ego at the expense of the natural order of the community, which is Macbeth's way; or by a process of seeing things only in the abstract he can seek to sink his individualism in that of the artificially created group and persuade himself that his identity is best preserved by contact with it. Hence the popularity to-day of the various social 'isms, in most cases motivated by a desire to shift the responsibility of individual conduct on to the impersonal processes of the social mechanism. In Shakespeare's day there still existed a natural order, based on the rhythms of the seasons and of the crops in a community still primarily agricultural in its being, by which to judge the disintegrating effect of the assertion of the individual will; but now it is impossible to conceive of the sinking of the individual in the—and this is the point—purely man-made and mechanical conception of the planner's community without seeing in such a project a definite regression. There is no escape from the burden of self-consciousness that three centuries of individual assertion have brought about, by the planner's attempt to identify his will with that of the community and to assure the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

future on the basis of the anonymity—flatteringly termed integration —that such an identification implies. For both the plan and the acceptance of the plan are the products of an age which feels its fundamental insecurity and turns aside from the fulness of life at the behest of the clearly defined but rigid. Such phenomena are related to the rise to power of the lower-middle classes in the person of the bureaucrat—a manifestation which is at once a cause and a symptom of the increasing mechanization of life and of the impersonality of human relationships. Hence the continual complaint among intellectuals of a lack of vitality (no longer a bang but a whimper) of which the extreme expression on the upper levels of society is the necrophilia of people like Dali[3] and among the lower-middle class is the cult of violence—the method of self-assertion adopted by the fundamentally insecure—implied in fascism and communism. It is chiefly because the English body politic, partly no doubt because of its insularity, has succeeded in retaining a certain *organic* (as opposed to a mechanical and imposed) quality of interrelated social obligations (*c.p.* the English eighteenth-century aristocracy with the French) that planning is less popular here than elsewhere.

But there are one or two other interesting features of the planner's dream of the future that merit consideration before we turn more particularly to those educational plans of Professor Mannheim's that are to materialize his vision of the new community. Professor Mannheim postulates a dynamic society. Convention he regards as stultifying; his outlook implies ever a reaching out towards the socially new and he looks upon the

> 'continual emergence of groups who will originate dominant ideas and form or change the sensibility of their time'

as desirable.

This emphasis on the new—which incidentally is curiously at odds with other features of Professor Mannheim's thought, as we shall see later—no doubt is meant to provide the obverse side to that lack of individual responsibility which submission to a plan implies. What society lacks in depth it is to make up in movement. Now, of course, it is perfectly true that societies do become fossilized; and there is always a danger that life will become stereotyped and conventional. Nevertheless it is the emphasis that Professor Mannheim places on the idea of continual change and the naïveté of his approval of an endless series of mutations that invite the strongest condemnation. Conventions of conduct and morality sum up, in the sphere of the imponderables, the wisdom of the race and are not to be abandoned lightly. They provide a certain atmosphere of emotional security, which is necessary to all development, and which comes from a sense of being in the right relationship to established rhythms of life. It is one of the great faults of our

[3]Note the fact that surrealism was a *fashionable* cult.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

present-day urban scientific civilization that the rate of change and the mobility of population is so great that the individual has no time to draw strength from the embodied wisdom that forms tradition, for tradition is the result of growth and implies a relationship of a very different sort from the mechanically imposed community of the planner. Tradition can, of course, be stultifying and cramping, for life must be lived forwards and not backwards; yet it can only be lived forwards satisfactorily in terms of the experience gained from the past (though at the same time, it may be added in parenthesis that, paradoxically enough, experience gained from the past is never adequate to enable the individual to assess completely the requirements of the future). Hence the need of change; but hence the need of a change adequately related to experience gained from, and based on a respect for, the past, the past history of the race. Indeed this continual grasping after the new, as Shakespeare realized, related as it is to the desire of futurity examined earlier, is always a characteristic of a *lack of being*, whether of an individual or a communal level. Macbeth, in seeking to assert his individual ego against the traditional relationships of respect to his king, suffers throughout the play a progressive loss of being which in the end takes from him even 'the taste of fears', makes life an endless succession of to-morrows without meaning, and turns him into the dwarfish thief that Malcolm's forces so contemptuously seek out. And here Shakespeare symbolically reveals that only those who can draw nutriment from established relationships are capable of full development. It is Macbeth's rejection of Duncan's offer, expressed metaphorically in terms of *natural growth and development*—

> I have begun to plant thee, and will labour
> To make thee full of growing

—that leads to his downfall. Professor Mannheim, whose mechanical outlook is in direct contradiction of all that wisdom has previously found satisfying, reflects the growing impersonality of human relationships in the superficiality of his thought mirrored in the abstractions he uses.

The ground is now prepared for a closer investigation of one particular aspect of Professor Mannheim's outlook—his attitude towards education. In his view, if a mass-planned society is to be anything but a society of termites, education must play an important part in fitting the individual to respond to the new ways of thought discussed above. An analysis of his suggestions may show us more fully the reasons which lie behind the inadequacy of his views. His ideas on education can well be judged from this extract from *Man and Society*:

> 'Sociologists do not regard education solely as a means of realizing abstract ideas of culture, such as humanism or technical specialization, but as part of the process of influencing men and women. *Education can only be understood when we know for*

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

what society and for what social position the pupils are being educated. Education does not mould men in the abstract but in and for a given society'.

So much for the liberal view that the aim of education is the development of the potentialities of the individual. Whatever Professor Mannheim thinks the sentences in italics mean, and however much he may protest that such is not his aim, it is difficult to see how an education preconceived in such a manner is to differ from propaganda for a particular type of society. It has to be admitted that even in the most liberal view the development of the individual is bound to be restricted by the preconceptions derived both by the teacher and the taught, partly from the limitations of the individual mind, and partly from the influence of the environment. All notions of being are set in a particular context, and freedom must always be relative, as can be seen from what has been said above about the healthy features of traditional modes of conduct; its incidence raises such questions as freedom from and for what? But to make only one aspect of the individual—his social—the ultimate criterion of value is not only to make man the end and aim of all things, but is also to rely on a singularly restricted view of the nature of that man. For a man is an individual as well as a social being; and outside himself he has duties to a super-personal set of values as well as to other people. A man must always be prepared to accept a certain amount of responsibility for the conduct of others, because of a sense both of obligation and of charity. Nevertheless there seem to be limits beyond which the individual's responsibility does not and must not, for the sake of his integrity, go. The fact that that limit is extremely difficult to define does not seem to me to be an adequate excuse for shirking the responsibility; for indeed, as I have said, it appears that theories of Professor Mannheim's type are attractive to many people largely because they shelve the whole question of the individual's responsibility for himself.

It is not difficult to see that Professor Mannheim makes out a superficially attractive case for mass education by appealing to certain vulgar prejudices that are likely to evoke an enthusiastic response from many educational circles to-day. First comes the attack on superior persons—here equated with 'closed academic circles', who appear to favour 'an artificial clumsiness', and who cultivate an 'academic aloofness which finds life sublime only in a kind of stratosphere when our minds are kept safely at a distance from suffering and vulgarity'. It would take too long to discover to what an extent these academic circles are fictions of Professor Mannheim's imagination. A visitor to this year's exhibition at the Royal Academy might tend to favour the general direction of Professor Mannheim's attack although he must perforce regret the crudity of its expression; nevertheless there are, to my own certain knowledge, academic circles as keenly alive intellectually as any others to be found; and the whole attack on the academic is to be

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

deprecated as part of that movement which acclaims the superficial and irresponsible and that is so debasing the standards of our time. To put it another way: when some people attack the academic we may be prepared to give them a sympathetic hearing, because they themselves attain a measure of achievement that gives them the right to be listened to; when Professor Mannheim does so, we tend to regret the passing of standards which, however inadequate in certain ways they may be, at least represent a sufficient degree of intellectual rigour to provide a refreshing comment on the shallowness of Professor Mannheim's social theories.

But to continue with Professor Mannheim's views on the nature of those who are responsible for our cultural heritage. Culture, he thinks, is not to be the prerogative of the educated few; and though the original thinker is to play an important part in the evolution of our dynamic society (what happens, I wonder, to the original thinker who does not think in concordance with the dictates of the society and of the social position he occupies?) he desires that new truths, new ideas should be accessible to all; only so can the society become integrated. Hence the necessity of popularization, of a type that will not merely provide a 'dilution of real substance', but be a 'creative dissemination'. The whole problem, indeed, resolves itself into the 'dissemination of the substance of culture without diluting it'.

Of these creative disseminators, these who 'originate at lower levels', Professor Mannheim gives several examples which it will be instructive to examine later. For the moment it is necessary to look at the distinction mentioned above between 'culture' and the 'substance of culture'. Professor Mannheim recommends a process by which this creative dissemination is to take place. It involves fastening on what is essential—a democratizing process that is

> 'a search for truth that is in principle accessible to everybody, not because it is trivial or diluted, but because it is reduced to the really human elements of knowledge'.

What do certain of these phrases mean? Truth for instance, or such elements of truth as man's mind can encompass, is always in principle accessible to everybody provided they have the mental capacity to grasp the 'truth' that is presented to them; here, the words, if they convey anything at all, merely fog the issue. It is not a question of whether the truth in principle is there to be grasped, but whether the type of people Professor Mannheim has in mind are in fact capable of grasping it. Then what are the *really human* elements in knowledge? All the elements in knowledge are human (except, possibly, the religious would argue, those elements based on revelation, but I do not think that that is the contrast Professor Mannheim has in mind) in that they are the products of human intelligence in its relationship to the other (human and non-human). In so far as the words have any meaning at all, they appear to be purely emotive—to give a warm comforting

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sense of togetherness in contrast to that academic aloofness of which Professor Mannheim so strongly disapproves. The word 'real' too, is a stumbling-block in all this sort of writing. In a contemporary journal (*Pilot Papers*), Mr. Jarvis in an article on Discussion Groups quotes this passage with approval, and states that

> 'Adult education for democracy ought to concern itself with the real contemporary problems of real people'.

How does one qualify to become a *real* person with a *real* problem? The only way it is possible to give it a meaning is to make it refer to

> 'the type of person of whom I socially approve interested in the sort of problem I regard as important'.

Its aim however is to gain approval; in an age that is so loosely pragmatic in its outlook as our own, the sense of being in touch with what the writer conceives to be 'reality' which the use of the word 'real' (and 'contemporary') here gives, conveys a comforting impression of concern for immediate issues, so much more satisfying to a certain type of mind than a more careful definition of the issues involved would be.

Previously, however, Professor Mannheim has given a clue to the origin of this idea of the 'essential':

> 'Descartes, for example, in his treatise on method suggests the need for getting away from the complexity of scholastic discussion and the dogmatism of closed groups. He made it a criterion for the new type of thought that it should be clear and distinct'.

We have already seen that Professor Mannheim associates himself, in his emphasis on the new, with a type of anti-historicism that is in fact typically Cartesian. Descartes, in fact, comes at the beginning of that process—associated with the scientific revolution—of abstraction of a particular kind which involves the seizing on certain features only in a totality presented and seeing in those elements the 'real' as opposed to the fictitious qualities 'accidentally' associated with them. He asserts the power of the cognitive ego—*cogito ergo sum*—and makes the abstractions of the cognitive ego the basis of the identity of the individual. It is the work of people like Descartes—and, despite differences of method, of Bacon, too—that gives the truth to Nietzsche's remark that the Lutheran Reformation was the indignation of the simple against the complex.[4] Such a process of simplification is inherent in the scientific outlook, for at least in its earlier stages it involved a surrender of the complexity of the rationalizing intellect (as that was understood in the middle ages) to requirements imposed by the urge to

[4]Descartes, of course, was an orthodox Catholic, but his philosophical work is spiritually akin to the revolt that Luther represents against the complexity of the mediaeval outlook.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

investigate certain elements only abstracted from the material world presented to the mind. When Descartes conducted his experiment with the wax, he found what he thought was the 'essential' element connecting the hard wax with the melted. What he did not see was that that 'essential' element was only the essential element for certain purposes, and that those qualities of hardness, yellowness, etc., that the wax possessed under certain external conditions of temperature, etc., were just as 'real' as that idea of the wax that he arrived at by comparing the hard and the molten wax. The same process can be examined in the changed attitude towards language that Mr. L. C. Knights, in an interesting essay on Bacon based on Mr. T. S. Eliot's remark about the dissociation of sensibility that set in during the seventeenth century, examines.[5] A comparison of the Shakespearean and the Baconian use of metaphor shows the difference between a use of language springing from the awareness of the interrelated quality of the various planes of human existence, and one that denotes the dominance of certain aspects of the mind—especially of the assertive will and of the calculating intellect working towards limited ends assessable in terms of 'practical' politics—over the rest. Bacon's metaphors and similes are, indeed, purely illustrative; the points of contact do not create an awareness in the mind of any possible modes of relationship but merely result from the realization of certain abstract similarities between the tenor and the vehicle which will serve to illustrate a meaning already completely formed. As Mr. Knights expresses it:

> 'the whole trend of Bacon's work is to encourage the relegation of instinctive and emotional life to a sphere separate from and inferior to the sphere of thought and practical activity'.

This long aside on Bacon and Descartes has been worth while because it shows the beginning of a process that has led directly to Professor Mannheim's educational theories. The aims—those of control and mastery over the environment—are the same. The temper of mind is similar; even Professor Mannheim's style exemplifies what three centuries of Cartesian abstraction can do. The whole of his view on popularization based on an entirely fictitious relationship between 'knowledge' and the 'essentials' of knowledge, stands revealed as a further example of that process of abstraction that Descartes applied to his piece of wax. For as soon as we start reducing anything to its essentials, we have to ask ourselves 'essential for what purpose?' Yellowness and hardness may well be the essential qualities of wax if our interests are those of a painter. Any idea which is stated in different simpler terms becomes immediately a different idea; it may bear some relationship to the statement of the original idea just as requests framed in the form of 'Please be quiet' and 'Shut up' bear some

[5]L. C. Knights: 'Bacon and the Seventeenth-Century Dissociation of Sensibility', *Explorations*, Chatto and Windus, 1946.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

relationship to an expressed desire for tranquillity. But there is a whole world of difference between the emotional context of the two clauses, a difference which is just as real as the relationship of the two to a third impersonal translation. It is precisely because he tends to think on a certain level of abstraction that Professor Mannheim makes the mistake of imagining that any idea can be reduced to a simpler form than that in which it already exists and *still remain the same undiluted idea.* It is, of course, frequently possible to break up propositions about the nature of human existence and the requirements of man into a number of simpler elements for the purpose of examining each element in detail; but to mistake any one of those simplifications for the essential serves only to betray the nature of the interest of the person directing the scrutiny unless backed by the prevailing emphasis of the originator of the idea; and even then, no idea can ever truly be stated in any other terms but those in which it has been first formulated; varying degrees of approximation are alone possible, though admittedly necessary for the purpose of argument.

When we turn to examine those examples of the substance of culture which Professor Mannheim gives, any remaining doubts about the inadequacy of his outlook are dispelled. His remarks about jazz—an example he gives of the possibilities of popularization—are too obscure to admit of discussion, though the manner in which he concedes the necessity of an appeal to a connoisseur for the purpose of distinguishing the 'work of routine' from the genuine 'ecstasy' seems to me, if it means what it appears to mean, to give his case away. His other example of 'creativity' at a lower level is Noel Coward who apparently

> 'conveys a new type of vibration to a simpler type of mind'

and is not to be considered as a

> 'publicity agent for those who create on a higher plane'.

We may well absolve Mr. Coward from the latter charge, for there is nothing in his work that shows even the slightest awareness of the work of those who create on a higher plane. It is still more difficult to discover the precise nature of the new vibration Mr. Coward is supposed to convey to any mind at all. His plays of high society merely demonstrate the emotional and intellectual sterility of the class he deals with; and in so far as they introduce an audience drawn from another social class to modes of conduct different from those to which it is accustomed, they merely serve to corrupt, because of the complete lack of seriousness of the characters portrayed. His plays based on middle-class morality which are symptomatic of his late development only show the shrewdness with which he has managed to assess the movements of public opinion. Far from being an originator, he is content to reinforce in his capacity as paid entertainer, whose function it is to give the public what it wants, the prejudices of his audience.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This can be demonstrated from the fact that his problems are, when examined critically, really bogus problems. *Brief Encounter*, for instance, which in its earlier stages seemed to show a certain capacity for realizing the complexities of an emotional situation, though the triviality of the characters prevented it from assuming any great importance, is falsified at the end, when, by giving the wife the husband to fall back on, it is shown that the problem hardly existed at all; the audience is sent away happy in the feeling that it has both got its cake and eaten it. To state that this sort of stuff gives us

> 'the same unexpected shock which undermines our complacency when we enjoy great art or listen to a great orator'

provides a measure by which we can judge the depth of Professor Mannheim's appreciation of artistic seriousness.[6]

Nor is it sufficient to appeal to mediaeval times as providing a precedent for the capacity to express a common experience at a number of levels, for the situations of mediaeval and modern man are quite different in several important respects, as can be deduced from what has been said above. The mediaeval age had a unifying principle that lay outside the social order, but even so it is useless to imagine that the theologian and the peasant paid homage to the same God or that any mediaeval theologian would have been muddle-headed enough to imagine that the peasant had somehow seized upon the 'essential' feature of the God that he worshipped.[7] The difference which may partly explain Professor Mannheim's approach, lies in the fact that the mediaeval peasant was not in a position to impose his views on the rest of society as his modern counterpart, the urban proletarian, in a mass social order, is capable of doing; for it is hard to avoid the conclusion that Professor Mannheim is subconsciously rationalizing a state of affairs that, once political power has been placed in the hands of those not conspicuously capable of undertaking the responsibility, as it now has, can only be made endurable by sentimentalizing the nature of the forces faced with the necessity of achieving some sort of order in the present chaos. Professor Mannheim's views are in fact symptomatic of a period that has sought relief from the complexity of living and from the tensions of the age by the creation of new, simplified, *social* mythologies; the nineteenth-century myth of the noble savage has been replaced by the myth of the noble scion of the masses who is to provide us with those expressions of genuineness, spontaneity, dynamism, creativity, originality and all those other qualities which the superficial taste of our age finds so desirable—

---

[6]This, of course, is not meant to deny that Mr. Coward has talent in certain directions.

[7]The comment of William Blake to the effect that the fool sees not the same tree as a wise man is relevant here.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

What god, man, or hero
Shall I place a tin wreath upon!

Professor Mannheim, for all the scientific colouring of his writing all too frequently utters the sentiments and employs the stale vocabulary of our outworn romantics who, symptomatically, find 'ecstasy' one of their highest words of praise.

I hope what I regard as the insufficiency of some of Professor Mannheim's views has now been sufficiently demonstrated, but a word of warning must end this. These criticisms of Professor Mannheim's ideas must not be taken as arguments against all forms of popularization; provided the popularizer is completely aware of what he is doing he performs a very useful function. One would have imagined that the work of the late Susan Stebbing[8] and Mr. J. L. Russell[9] would have provided sufficient warning against a particular type of popularization that Professor Mannheim's views would seem to foster. Yet it is obvious, of course, that simplification —for the student in the text-book, for instance—is essential; certain simplified features of any subject must be grasped before it can be appreciated in its full complexity. But it must always be understood that what is being presented is not some quintessential knowledge that obviates the necessity of hard work and unremitting labour later, but a different set of ideas that bears a relationship of varying degrees of crudity to the original. Provided that is realized, the popularizer performs a useful and desirable function in society. I have merely been concerned here to combat the idea, flattering to the common man, but vicious in its implications for our society, that what the popularizer can present is as good as—indeed almost preferable to—what can only be grasped by mature intelligences and complex minds. It would be a grave disservice to mankind and to those values that mankind has, at great pain and sacrifice, gradually evolved, to suggest anything different.

G. H. BANTOCK.

---

[8] *Philosophy and the Physicists*, by L. Susan Stebbing, an analysis of the popular philosophy of Jeans and Eddington.

[9] 'The Scientific Best-seller', by J. L. Russell, printed in *Determinations*, edited by F. R. Leavis.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE NOVEL AS DRAMATIC POEM (I):

'HARD TIMES'

HARD TIMES is not a difficult work; its intention and nature are pretty obvious. If, then, it is the masterpiece I take it for, why has it not had general recognition? To judge by the critical record, it has had none at all. If there exists anywhere an appreciation, or even an acclaiming reference, I have missed it. In the books and essays on Dickens, so far as I know them (except R. C. Churchill's essay in this journal), it is passed over as a very minor thing; too slight and insignificant to distract us for more than a sentence or two from the works worth critical attention. Yet, if I am right, of all Dickens's works it is the one that has all the strength of his genius, together with a strength no other of them can show—that of a completely serious work of art.

The answer to the question asked above seems to me to bear on the traditional approach to 'the English novel'. For all the more sophisticated critical currency of the last decade or two, that approach still prevails, at any rate in the appreciation of the Victorian novelists. The business of the novelist, you gather, is to 'create a world', and the mark of the master is external abundance —he gives you lots of 'life'. The test of life in his characters (he must above all create 'living' characters) is that they go on living outside the book. Expectations as unexacting as these are not, when they encounter significance, grateful for it, and when it meets them in that insistent form where nothing is very engaging as 'life' unless its relevance is fully taken, miss it altogether. This is the only way in which I can account for the neglect suffered by Henry James's *The Europeans*, a work that I mention because it too, like *Hard Times*, is a moral fable, and because one might have supposed that James would enjoy the advantage of being approached with expectations of subtlety and closely calculated relevance. Fashion, however, has not recommended his earlier work, and this (whatever appreciation may be enjoyed by *The Ambassadors*) still suffers from the prevailing expectation of redundant and irrelevant 'life'.

I need say no more by way of defining the moral fable than that in it the intention is peculiarly insistent, so that the representative significance of everything in the fable—character, episode, and so on—is immediately apparent as we read. Intention might seem to be insistent enough in the opening of *Hard Times*, in that scene in Mr. Gradgrind's school. But then, intention is often very insistent in Dickens, without its being taken up in any inclusive significance that informs and organizes a coherent whole; and, for lack of any expectation of an organized whole, it has no doubt been supposed that in *Hard Times* the satiric irony of the first two

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

chapters is merely, in the large and genial Dickensian way, thrown together with melodrama, pathos and humour—and that we are given these ingredients more abundantly and exuberantly elsewhere. Actually, all the Dickensian vitality is there, in its varied characteristic modes, which have the more force because they are free of redundance: the creative exuberance is controlled by a profound inspiration.

The inspiration is what is given in the grim clinch of the title, *Hard Times*. Ordinarily Dickens's criticisms of the world he lives in are casual and incidental—a matter of including among the ingredients of a book some indignant treatment of a particular abuse. But in *Hard Times* he is for once possessed by a comprehensive vision, one in which the inhumanities of Victorian civilization are seen as fostered and sanctioned by a hard philosophy, the aggressive formulation of an inhumane spirit. The philosophy is represented by Thomas Gradgrind, Esquire, Member of Parliament for Coketown, who has brought up his children on the lines of the experiment recorded by John Stuart Mill as carried out on himself. What Gradgrind stands for is, though repellent, nevertheless respectable; his Utilitarianism is a theory sincerely held, and there is intellectual disinterestedness in its application. But Gradgrind marries his eldest daughter to Josiah Bounderby, 'banker, merchant, manufacturer', about whom there is no disinterestedness whatever, and nothing to be respected. Bounderby is Victorian 'rugged individualism' in its grossest and most intransigent form. Concerned with nothing but self-assertion and power and material success, he has no interest in ideals or ideas—except the idea of being the completely self-made man (since, for all his brag, he is not that in fact). Dickens here makes a just observation about the affinities and practical tendency of Utilitarianism, as, in his presentment of the Gradgrind home and the Gradgrind elementary school, he does about the Utilitarian spirit in Victorian education.

All this is obvious enough. But Dickens's art, while remaining that of the great popular entertainer, has in *Hard Times*, as he renders his full critical vision, a stamina, a flexibility combined with consistency, and a depth, that he seems to have had little credit for. Take that opening scene in the school-room:

> ' "Girl number twenty", said Mr. Gradgrind, squarely pointing with his square forefinger, "I don't know that girl. Who is that girl?"
>
> "Sissy Jupe, sir", explained number twenty, blushing, standing up, and curtsying.
>
> "Sissy is not a name", said Mr. Gradgrind. "Don't call yourself Sissy. Call yourself Cecilia".
>
> "It's father as call me Sissy, sir", returned the young girl in a trembling voice, and with another curtsy.
>
> "Then he has no business to do it", said Mr. Gradgrind. "Tell him he mustn't. Cecilia Jupe. Let me see. What is your father?"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"He belongs to the horse-riding, if you please, sir".

Mr. Gradgrind frowned, and waved off the objectionable calling with his hand.

"We don't want to know anything about that here. You mustn't tell us about that here. Your father breaks horses, don't he?"

"If you please, sir, when they can get any to break, they do break horses in the ring, sir".

"You mustn't tell us about the ring here. Very well, then. Describe your father as a horse-breaker. He doctors sick horses, I dare say?"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"Very well, then. He is a veterinary surgeon, a farrier, and horse-breaker. Give me your definition of a horse".

(Sissy Jupe thrown into the greatest alarm by this demand).

"Girl number twenty unable to define a horse!" said Mr. Gradgrind, for the general benefit of all the little pitchers. "Girl number twenty possessed of no facts in reference to one of the commonest animals! Some boy's definition of a horse. Bitzer, yours".

* * * *

"Quadruped. Graminivorous. Forty teeth, namely, twenty-four grinders, four eye-teeth, and twelve incisive. Sheds coat in the spring; in marshy countries, sheds hoofs too. Hoofs hard, but requiring to be shod with iron. Age known by marks in mouth". Thus (and much more) Bitzer.

"Now, girl number twenty", said Mr. Gradgrind, "you know what a horse is" '.

Lawrence himself, protesting against harmful tendencies in education, never made the point more tellingly. Sissie has been brought up among horses, and among people whose livelihood depends upon understanding horses, but 'we don't want to know anything about that here'. Such knowledge isn't real knowledge. Bitzer, the model pupil, on the button's being pressed, promptly vomits up the genuine article, 'Quadruped. Graminivorous' etc.; and 'Now, girl number twenty, you know what a horse is'. The irony, pungent enough locally, is richly developed in the subsequent action. Bitzer's aptness has its evaluative comment in his career. Sissie's incapacity to acquire this kind of 'fact' or formula, her unaptness for education, is manifested to us, on the other hand, as part and parcel of her sovereign and indefeasible humanity: it is the virtue that makes it impossible for her to understand, or acquiesce in, an ethos for which she is 'girl number twenty', or to think of any other human being as a unit for arithmetic.

This kind of ironic method might seem to commit the author to very limited kinds of effect. In *Hard Times,* however, it associates quite congruously, such is the flexibility of Dickens's art, with very different methods; it co-operates in a truly dramatic and profoundly poetic whole. Sissie Jupe, who might be taken here

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for a merely conventional *persona*, has already, as a matter of fact, been established in a potently symbolic rôle: she is part of the poetically-creative operation of Dickens's genius in *Hard Times*. Here is a passage I omitted from the middle of the excerpt quoted above:

> 'The square finger, moving here and there, lighted suddenly on Bitzer, perhaps, because he chanced to sit in the same ray of sun-light which, darting in at one of the bare windows of the intensely whitewashed room, irradiated Sissy. For the boys and girls sat on the face of an inclined plane in two compact bodies, divided up the centre by a narrow interval; and Sissy, being at the corner of a row on the sunny side, came in for the beginning of a sunbeam, of which Bitzer, being at the corner of a row on the other side, a few rows in advance, caught the end. But, whereas the girl was so dark-eyed and dark-haired that she seemed to receive a deeper and more lustrous colour from the sun when it shone upon her, the boy was so light-eyed and light-haired that the self-same rays appeared to draw out of him what little colour he ever possessed. His cold eyes would hardly have been eyes, but for the short ends of lashes which, by bringing them into immediate contrast with something paler than themselves, expressed their form. His short-cropped hair might have been a mere continuation of the sandy freckles on his forehead and face. His skin was so unwholesomely deficient in the natural tinge, that he looked as though, if he were cut, he would bleed white'.

There is no need to insist on the force—representative of Dickens's art in general in *Hard Times*—with which the moral and spiritual differences are rendered here in terms of sensation, so that the symbolic intention emerges out of metaphor and the vivid evocation of the concrete. What may, perhaps, be emphasized is that Sissie stands for vitality as well as goodness—they are seen, in fact, as one; she is generous, impulsive life, finding self-fulfilment in self-forgetfulness—all that is the antithesis of calculating self-interest. There is an essentially Laurentian suggestion about the way in which 'the dark-eyed and dark-haired' girl, contrasting with Bitzer, seemed to receive a 'deeper and more lustrous colour from the sun', so opposing the life that is lived freely and richly from the deep instinctive and emotional springs to the thin-blooded quasi-mechanical product of Gradgrindery.

Sissie's symbolic significance is bound up with that of Sleary's Horse-riding, where human kindness is very insistently associated with vitality. The way in which the Horse-riding takes on its significance illustrates beautifully the poetic-dramatic nature of Dickens's art. From the utilitarian schoolroom Mr. Gradgrind walks towards his utilitarian abode, Stone Lodge, which, as Dickens evokes it, brings home to us concretely the model régime that for the little Gradgrinds (among whom are Malthus and Adam Smith) is an inescapable prison. But before he gets there he passes the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

back of a circus booth, and is pulled up by the sight of two palpable offenders. Looking more closely, 'what did he then behold but his own metallurgical Louisa peeping through a hole in a deal board, and his own mathematical Thomas abasing himself on the ground to catch but a hoof of the graceful equestrian Tyrolean flower act!' The chapter is called 'A Loophole', and Thomas 'gave himself up to be taken home like a machine'.

Representing human spontaneity, the circus-athletes represent at the same time highly-developed skill and deftness of kinds that bring poise, pride and confident ease—they are always buoyant, and, ballet-dancer-like, in training:

> 'There were two or three handsome young women among them, with two or three husbands, and their two or three mothers, and their eight or nine little children, who did the fairy business when required. The father of one of the families was in the habit of balancing the father of another of the families on the top of a great pole; the father of the third family often made a pyramid of both those fathers, with Master Kidderminster for the apex, and himself for the base; all the fathers could dance upon rolling casks, stand upon bottles, catch knives and balls, twirl hand-basins, ride upon anything, jump over everything, and stick at nothing. All the mothers could (and did) dance upon the slack wire and the tight-rope, and perform rapid acts on bare-backed steeds; none of them were at all particular in respect of showing their legs; and one of them, alone in a Greek chariot, drove six-in-hand into every town they came to. They all assumed to be mighty rakish and knowing, they were not very tidy in their private dresses, they were not at all orderly in their domestic arrangements, and the combined literature of the whole company would have produced but a poor letter on any subject. Yet there was a remarkable gentleness and childishness about these people, a special inaptitude for any kind of sharp practice, and an untiring readiness to help and pity one another, deserving often of as much respect, and always of as much generous construction, as the every-day virtues of any class of people in the world'.

Their skills have no value for the Utilitarian calculus, but they express vital human impulse, and they minister to vital human needs. The Horse-riding, frowned upon as frivolous and wasteful by Gradgrind and malignantly scorned by Bounderby, brings the machine-hands of Coketown (the spirit-quenching hideousness of which is hauntingly evoked) what they are starved of. It brings to them, not merely amusement, but art, and the spectacle of triumphant activity that, seeming to contain its end within itself, is, in its easy mastery, joyously self-justified. In investing a travelling circus with this kind of symbolic value Dickens expresses a profounder reaction to industrialism than might have been expected of him. It is not only pleasure and relaxation the Coke-towners stand in need of; he feels the dreadful degradation of life

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that would remain even if they were to be given a forty-four hour week, comfort, security and fun. We recall a characteristic passage from D. H. Lawrence:

> 'The car ploughed uphill through the long squalid straggle of Tevershall, the blackened brick dwellings, the black slate roofs, glistening their sharp edges, the mud black with coal-dust, the pavements wet and black. It was as if dismalness had soaked through and through everything. The utter negation of natural beauty, the utter negation of the gladness of life, the utter absence of the instinct for shapely beauty which every bird and beast has, the utter death of the human intuitive faculty was appalling. The stacks of soap in the grocers' shops, the rhubarb and lemons in the greengrocers'! the awful hats in the milliners all went by ugly, ugly, ugly, followed by the plaster and gilt horror of the cinema with its wet picture announcements, "A Woman's Love", and the new big Primitive chapel, primitive enough in its stark brick and big panes of greenish and raspberry glass in the windows. The Wesleyan chapel, higher up, was of blackened brick and stood behind iron railings and blackened shrubs. The Congregational chapel, which thought itself superior, was built of rusticated sandstone and had a steeple, but not a very high one. Just beyond were the new school buildings, expensive pink brick, and gravelled playground inside iron railings, all very imposing, and mixing the suggestion of a chapel and a prison. Standard Five girls were having a singing lesson, just finishing the la-me-do-la excerises and beginning a "sweet children's song". Anything more unlike song, spontaneous song, would be impossible to imagine: a strange bawling yell followed the outlines of a tune. It was not like animals: animals *mean* something when they yell. It was like nothing on earth, and it was called singing. Connie sat and listened with her heart in her boots, as Field was filling petrol. What could possibly become of such a people, a people in whom the living intuitive faculty was dead as nails, and only queer mechanical yells and uncanny will-power remained'.

Dickens couldn't have put it in just those terms, but the way in which his vision of the Horse-riders insists on their gracious vitality implies that reaction.

Here an objection may be anticipated—as a way of making a point. Coketown, like Gradgrind and Bounderby, is real enough; but it can't be contended that the Horse-riding is real in the same sense. There would have been some athletic skill and perhaps some bodily grace among the people of a Victorian travelling circus, but surely so much squalor, grossness and vulgarity that we must find Dickens's symbolism sentimentally false. And 'there was a remarkable gentleness and childishness about these people, a special inaptitude for any kind of sharp practice'—that, surely, is going ludicrously too far?

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

If Dickens, intent on an emotional effect, or drunk with moral enthusiasm, had been deceiving himself (it couldn't have been innocently) about the nature of the actuality, he would then indeed have been guilty of sentimental falsity, and the adverse criticism would have held. But the Horse-riding presents no such case. The virtues and qualities that Dickens prizes do indeed exist, and it is necessary for his critique of Utilitarianism and industrialism, and for (what is the same thing) his creative purpose, to evoke them vividly. The book can't, in my judgment, be fairly charged with giving a misleading representation of human nature. And it would plainly not be intelligent criticism to suggest that anyone could be misled about the nature of circuses by *Hard Times*. The critical question is merely one of tact: was it well-judged of Dickens to try and do *that*—which had to be done somehow—with a travelling circus?

Or rather, the question is: by what means has he succeeded? For the success is complete. It is conditioned partly by the fact that, from the opening chapters, we have been tuned for the reception of a highly conventional art—though it is a tuning that has no narrowly limiting effect. To describe at all cogently the means by which this responsiveness is set up would take a good deal of 'practical criticism' analysis—analysis that would reveal an extraordinary flexibility in the art of *Hard Times*. This can be seen very obviously in the dialogue. Some passages might come from an ordinary novel. Others have the ironic pointedness of the school-room scene in so insistent a form that we might be reading a work as stylized as Jonsonian comedy: Gradgrind's final exchange with Bitzer (quoted below) is a supreme instance. Others again are 'literary', like the conversation between Gradgrind and Louisa on her flight home for refuge from Mr. James Harthouse's attentions.

To the question how the reconciling is done—there is much more diversity in *Hard Times* than these references to dialogue suggest—the answer can be given by pointing to the astonishing and irresistible richness of life that characterizes the book everywhere. It meets us everywhere, unstrained and natural, in the prose. Out of such prose a great variety of presentations can arise congenially with equal vividness. There they are, unquestionably 'real'. It goes back to an extraordinary energy of perception and registration in Dickens. 'When people say that Dickens exaggerates', says Mr. Santayana, 'it seems to me that they can have no eyes and no ears. They probably have only *notions* of what things and people are; they accept them conventionally, at their diplomatic value'. Settling down as we read to an implicit recognition of this truth, we don't readily and confidently apply any criterion we suppose ourselves to hold for distinguishing varieties of relation between what Dickens gives us and a normal 'real'. His flexibility is that of a richly poetic art of the word. He doesn't write 'poetic prose'; he writes with a poetic force of evocation, registering with the responsiveness of a genius of verbal

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

expression what he so sharply sees and feels. In fact, by texture, imaginative mode, symbolic method, and the resulting concentration, *Hard Times* affects us as belonging with formally poetic works.

There is, however, more to be said about the success that attends Dickens's symbolic intention in the Horse-riding; there is an essential quality of his genius to be emphasized. There is no Hamlet in him, and he is quite unlike Mr. Eliot.

> The red-eyed scavengers are creeping
> From Kentish Town and Golders Green

—there is nothing of that in Dickens's reaction to life. He observes with gusto the humanness of humanity as exhibited in the urban (and suburban) scene. When he sees, as he sees so readily, the common manifestations of human kindness, and the essential virtues, asserting themselves in the midst of ugliness, squalor and banality, his warmly sympathetic response has no disgust to overcome. There is no suggestion, for instance, of recoil—or of distance-keeping—from the game-eyed, brandy-soaked, flabby-surfaced Mr. Sleary, who is successfully made to figure for us a humane, anti-Utilitarian positive. This is not sentimentality in Dickens, but genius, and a genius that should be found peculiarly worth attention in an age when, as D. H. Lawrence (with, as I remember, Mr. Wyndham Lewis immediately in view) says, 'My God! they stink' tends to be an insuperable and final reaction.

Dickens, as everyone knows, is very capable of sentimentality. We have it in *Hard Times* (though not to any seriously damaging effect) in Stephen Blackpool, the good victimized working-man, whose perfect patience under infliction we are expected to find supremely edifying and irresistibly touching as the agonies are piled on for his martyrdom. But Sissie Jupe is another matter. A general description of her part in the fable might suggest the worst, but actually she has nothing in common with Little Nell: she shares in the strength of the Horse-riding. She is wholly convincing in the function Dickens assigns to her. The working of her influence in the Utilitarian home is conveyed with a fine tact, and we do really feel her as a growing potency. Dickens can even, with complete success, give her the stage for a victorious *tête-à-tête* with the well-bred and languid elegant Mr. James Harthouse, in which she tells him that his duty is to leave Coketown and cease troubling Louisa with his attentions:

> 'She was not afraid of him, or in any way disconcerted; she seemed to have her mind entirely preoccupied with the occasion of her visit, and to have substituted that consideration for herself'.

The quiet victory of disinterested goodness is wholly convincing.

At the opening of the book Sissie establishes the essential distinction between Gradgrind and Bounderby. Gradgrind, by

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

taking her home, however ungraciously, shows himself capable of humane feeling, however unacknowledged. We are reminded, in the previous school-room scene, of the Jonsonian affinities of Dickens's art, and Bounderby turns out to be consistently a Jonsonian character in the sense that he is incapable of change. He remains the blustering egotist and braggart, and responds in character to the collapse of his marriage:

> ' "I'll give *you* to understand, in reply to that, that there unquestionably is an incompatibility of the first magnitude—to be summed up in this—that your daughter don't properly know her husband's merits, and is not impressed with such a sense as would become her, by George! of the honour of his alliance. That's plain speaking, I hope" '.

He remains Jonsonianly consistent in his last testament and death. But Gradgrind, in the nature of the fable, has to *experience* the confutation of his philosophy, and to be capable of the change involved in admitting that life has proved him wrong. (Dickens's art in *Hard Times* differs from Ben Jonson's not in being inconsistent, but in being so very much more flexible and inclusive—a point that seemed to be worth making because the relation between Dickens and Jonson has been stressed of late, and I have known unfair conclusions to be drawn from the comparison, notably in respect of *Hard Times*).

The confutation of Utilitarianism by life is conducted with great subtlety. That the conditions for it are there in Mr. Gradgrind he betrays by his initial kindness, ungenial enough, but properly rebuked by Bounderby, to Sissie. 'Mr. Gradgrind', we are told, 'though hard enough, was by no means so rough a man as Mr. Bounderby. His character was not unkind, all things considered; it might have been very kind indeed if only he had made some mistake in the arithmetic that balanced it years ago'. The inadequacy of the calculus is beautifully exposed when he brings it to bear on the problem of marriage in the consummate scene with his eldest daughter:

> 'He waited, as if he would have been glad that she said something. But she said never a word.
>
> "Louisa, my dear, you are the subject of a proposal of marriage that has been made to me".
>
> Again he waited, and again she answered not one word. This so far surprised him as to induce him gently to repeat, "A proposal of marriage, my dear". To which she returned, without any visible emotion whatever:
>
> "I hear you, father. I am attending, I assure you".
>
> "Well!" said Mr. Gradgrind, breaking into a smile, after being for the moment at a loss, "you are even more dispassionate than I expected, Louisa. Or, perhaps, you are not unprepared for the announcement I have it in charge to make?"
>
> "I cannot say that, father, until I hear it. Prepared or unprepared, I wish to hear it all from you. I wish to hear you

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

state it to me, father".

Strange to relate, Mr. Gradgrind was not so collected at this moment as his daughter was. He took a paper knife in his hand, turned it over, laid it down, took it up again, and even then had to look along the blade of it, considering how to go on.

"What you say, my dear Louisa, is perfectly reasonable. I have undertaken, then, to let you know that—in short, that Mr. Bounderby . . . "'

His embarrassment—by his own avowal—is caused by the perfect rationality with which she receives his overture. He is still more disconcerted when, with a completely dispassionate matter-of-factness that does credit to his régime, she gives him the opportunity to state in plain terms precisely what marriage should mean for the young Houynhnhnm:

'Silence between them. The deadly statistical clock very hollow. The distant smoke very black and heavy.

"Father", said Louisa, "do you think I love Mr. Bounderby?"

Mr. Gradgrind was extremely discomfited by this unexpected question. "Well, my child", he returned, "I—really—cannot take upon myself to say".

"Father", pursued Louisa in exactly the same voice as before, "do you ask me to love Mr. Bounderby?"

"My deal Louisa, no. I ask nothing".

"Father", she still pursued, "does Mr. Bounderby ask me to love him?"

"Really, my dear", said Mr. Gradgrind, "it is difficult to answer your question—"

"Difficult to answer it, Yes or No, father?"

"Certainly, my dear. Because"—here was something to demonstrate, and it set him up again—"because the reply depends so materially, Louisa, on the sense in which we use the expression. Now, Mr. Bounderby does not do you the injustice, and does not do himself the injustice, of pretending to anything fanciful, fantastic, or (I am using synonymous terms) sentimental. Mr. Bounderby would have seen you grow up under his eyes to very little purpose, if he could so far forget what is due to your good sense, not to say to his, as to address you from any such ground. Therefore, perhaps, the expression itself—I merely suggest this to you, my dear—may be a little misplaced".

"What would you advise me to use in its stead, father?"

"Why, my dear Louisa", said Mr. Gradgrind, completely recovered by this time, "I would advise you (since you ask me) to consider this question, as you have been accustomed to consider every other question, simply as one of tangible Fact. The ignorant and the giddy may embarrass such subjects with irrelevant fancies, and other absurdities that have no existence, properly viewed—really no existence—but it is no compliment to you to say that you know better. Now, what are the Facts

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of this case? You are, we will say in round numbers, twenty years of age; Mr. Bounderby is, we will say in round numbers, fifty. There is some disparity in your respective years, but . . . ''

—And at this point Mr. Gradgrind seizes the chance for a happy escape into statistics. But Louisa brings him firmly back:

'"What do you recommend, father?", asked Louisa, her reserved composure not in the least affected by these gratifying results, "that I should substitute for the term I used just now? For the misplaced expression?"

"Louisa", returned her father, "it appears to me that nothing can be plainer. Confining yourself rigidly to Fact, the question of Fact you state to yourself is: Does Mr. Bounderby ask me to marry him? Yes, he does. The sole remaining question then is: Shall I marry him? I think nothing can be plainer than that".

"Shall I marry him?" repeated Louisa with great deliberation.

"Precisely" '.

It is a triumph of ironic art. No logical analysis could dispose of the philosophy of fact and calculus with such neat finality. As the issues are reduced to algebraic formulation they are patently emptied of all real meaning. The instinct-free rationality of the emotionless Houynhnhnm is a void. Louisa proceeds to try and make him understand that she is a living creature and therefore no Houynhnhnm, but in vain ('to see it, he must have overleaped at a bound the artificial barriers he had for many years been erecting between himself and all those subtle essences of humanity which will elude the utmost cunning of algebra, until the last trumpet ever to be sounded will blow even algebra to wreck').

'Removing her eyes from him, she sat so long looking silently towards the town, that he said at length: "Are you consulting the chimneys of the Coketown works, Louisa?"

"There seems to be nothing there but languid and monotonous smoke. Yet, when the night comes, Fire bursts out, father!" she answered, turning quickly.

"Of course I know that, Louisa. I do not see the application of the remark". To do him justice, he did not at all.

She passed it away with a slight motion of her hand, and concentrating her attention upon him again, said, "Father, I have often thought that life is very short"—This was so distinctly one of his subjects that he interposed:

"It is short, no doubt, my dear. Still, the average duration of human life is proved to have increased of late years. The calculations of various life assurance and annuity offices, among other figures which cannot go wrong, have established the fact".

"I speak of my own life, father".

"Oh indeed! Still", said Mr. Gradgrind, "I need not point out to you, Louisa, that it is governed by the laws which govern lives in the aggregate".

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"While it lasts, I would wish to do the little I can, and the little I am fit for. What does it matter?"

Mr. Gradgrind seemed rather at a loss to understand the last four words; replying, "How, matter? What matter, my dear?"

"Mr. Bounderby", she went on in a steady, straight way, without regarding this, "asks me to marry him. The question I have to ask myself is, shall I marry him? That is so, father, is it not? You have told me so, father. Have you not?"

"Certainly, my dear".

"Let it be so" '.

The psychology of Louisa's development and of her brother Tom's is sound. Having no outlet for her emotional life except in her love for her brother, she lives for him, and marries Bounderby —under pressure from Tom—for Tom's sake ('What does it matter?"). Thus, by the constrictions and starvations of the Gradgrind régime are natural affection and capacity for disinterested devotion turned to ill. As for Tom, the régime has made of him a bored and sullen whelp, and 'he was becoming that not unprecedented triumph of calculation which is usually at work on number one'—the Utilitarian philosophy has done that for him. He declares that when he goes to live with Bounderby as having a post in the bank, 'he'll have his revenge'.—'I mean, I'll enjoy myself a little, and go about and see something and hear something. I'll recompense myself for the way in which I've been brought up'. His descent into debt and bank-robbery is natural. And it is natural that Louisa, having sacrificed herself for this unrepaying object of affection, should be found not altogether unresponsive when Mr. James Harthouse, having sized up the situation, pursues his opportunity with well-bred and calculating tact. His apologia for genteel cynicism is a shrewd thrust at the Gradgrind philosophy:

' "The only difference between us and the professors of virtue or benevolence, or philanthropy—never mind the name—is, that we know it is all meaningless, and say so; while they know it equally, and will never say so".

Why should she be shocked or warned by this reiteration? It was not so unlike her father's principles, and her early training, that it need startle her'.

When, fleeing from temptation, she arrives back at her father's house, tells him her plight, and, crying, "All I know is, your philosophy and your teaching will not save me", collapses, he sees 'the pride of his heart and the triumph of his system lying an insensible heap at his feet'. The fallacy now calamitously demonstrated can be seen focussed in that 'pride', which brings together in illusory oneness the pride of his system and his love for his child. What that love is Gradgrind now knows, and he knows that it matters to him more than the system, which is thus confuted (the educational failure as such being a lesser matter). There is

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nothing sentimental here; the demonstration is impressive, because we are convinced of the love, and because Gradgrind has been made to exist for us as a man who has 'meant to do right':

> 'He said it earnestly, and, to do him justice, he had. In gauging fathomless deeps with his little mean excise rod, and in staggering over the universe with his rusty stiff-legged compasses, he had meant to do great things. Within the limits of his short tether he had tumbled about, annihilating the flowers of existence with greater singleness of purpose than many of the blatant personages whose company he kept'.

The demonstration still to come, that of which the other 'triumph of his system', Tom, is the centre, is sardonic comedy, imagined with great intensity and done with the sure touch of genius. There is the pregnant scene in which Mr. Gradgrind, in the deserted ring of a third-rate travelling circus, has to recognize his son in a comic negro servant; and has to recognize that his son owes his escape from Justice to a peculiarly disinterested gratitude—to the opportunity given him to assume such a disguise by the non-Utilitarian Mr. Sleary, grateful for Sissie's sake:

> 'In a preposterous coat, like a beadle's, with cuffs and flaps exaggerated to an unspeakable extent; in an immense waistcoat, knee breeches, buckled shoes, and a mad cocked-hat; with nothing fitting him, and everything of coarse material, moth-eaten, and full of holes; with seams in his black face, where fear and heat had started through the greasy composition daubed all over it; anything so grimly, detestably, ridiculously shameful as the whelp in his comic livery, Mr. Gradgrind never could by any other means have believed in, weighable and measurable fact though it was. And one of his model children had come to this!
>
> At first the whelp would not draw any nearer but persisted in remaining up there by himself. Yielding at length, if any concession so sullenly made can be called yielding, to the entreaties of Sissy—for Louisa he disowned altogether—he came down, bench by bench, until he stood in the sawdust, on the verge of the circle, as far as possible, within its limits, from where his father sat.
>
> "How was this done?" asked the father.
>
> "How was what done?" moodily answered the son.
>
> "This robbery", said the father, raising his voice upon the word.
>
> "I forced the safe myself overnight, and shut it up ajar before I went away. I had had the key that was found, made long before. I dropped it that morning, that it might be supposed to have been used. I didn't take the money all at once. I pretended to put my balance away every night, but I didn't. Now you know all about it".
>
> "If a thunderbolt had fallen on me", said the father, "it would have shocked me less than this!"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I don't see why", grumbled the son. "So many people are employed in situations of trust; so many people, out of so many, will be dishonest. I have heard you talk, a hundred times, of its being a law. How can *I* help laws? You have comforted others with such things, father. Comfort yourself!"

The father buried his face in his hands, and the son stood in his disgraceful grotesqueness, biting straw: his hands, with the black partly worn away inside, looking like the hands of a monkey. The evening was fast closing in; and, from time to time, he turned the whites of his eyes restlessly and impatiently towards his father. They were the only parts of his face that showed any life or expression, the pigment upon it was so thick'.

Something of the rich complexity of Dickens's art may be seen in this passage. No simple formula can take account of the various elements in the whole effect, a sardonic-tragic in which satire consorts with pathos. The excerpt in itself suggests the justification for saying that *Hard Times* is a poetic work. It suggests further that the genius of the writer may fairly be described as that of a poetic dramatist, and that, in our preconceptions about 'the novel', we may miss, within the field of fictional prose, possibilities of concentration and flexibility in the interpretation of life such as we associate with Shakespearian drama.

The note, as we have it above in Tom's retort, of ironic-satiric discomfiture of the Utilitarian philosopher by the rebound of his formulæ upon himself is developed in the ensuing scene with Bitzer, the truly successful pupil, the real triumph of the system. He arrives to intercept Tom's flight:

'Bitzer, still holding the paralysed culprit by the collar, stood in the Ring, blinking at his old patron through the darkness of the twilight.

"Bitzer", said Mr. Gradgrind, broken down, and miserably submissive to him, "have you a heart?"

"The circulation, sir", returned Bitzer, smiling at the oddity of the question, "couldn't be carried on without one. No man, sir, acquainted with the facts established by Harvey relating to the circulation of the blood, can doubt that I have a heart".

"Is it accessible", cried Mr. Gradgrind, "to any compassionate influence?"

"It is accessible to Reason, sir", returned the excellent young man. "And to nothing else".

They stood looking at each other; Mr. Gradgrind's face as white as the pursuer's.

"What motive—even what motive in reason—can you have for preventing the escape of this wretched youth", said Mr. Gradgrind, "and crushing his miserable father? See his sister here. Pity us!"

"Sir", returned Bitzer in a very business-like and logical manner, "since you ask me what motive I have in reason for taking young Mr. Tom back to Coketown, it is only reasonable

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to let you know . . . I am going to take young Mr. Tom back to Coketown, in order to deliver him over to Mr. Bounderby. Sir, I have no doubt whatever that Mr. Bounderby will then promote me to young Mr. Tom's situation. And I wish to have his situation, sir, for it will be a rise to me, and will do me good".

"If this is solely a question of self-interest with you—" Mr. Gradgrind began.

"I beg your pardon for interrupting you, sir", returned Bitzer, "but I am sure you know that the whole social system is a question of self-interest. What you must always appeal to is a person's self-interest. It's your only hold. We are so constituted. I was brought up in that catechism when I was very young, sir, as you are aware".

"What sum of money", said Mr. Gradgrind, "will you set against your expected promotion?"

"Thank you, sir", returned Bitzer, "for hinting at the proposal; but I will not set any sum against it. Knowing that your clear head would propose that alternative, I have gone over the calculations in my mind; and I find that to compound a felony, even on very high terms indeed, would not be as safe and good for me as my improved prospects in the Bank".

"Bitzer", said Mr. Gradgrind, stretching out his hands as though he would have said, See how miserable I am! "Bitzer, I have but one chance left to soften you. You were many years at my school. If, in remembrance of the pains bestowed upon you there, you can persuade yourself in any degree to disregard your present interest and release my son, I entreat and pray you to give him the benefit of that remembrance".

"I really wonder, sir", rejoined the old pupil in an argumentative manner, "to find you taking a position so untenable. My schooling was paid for; it was a bargain; and when I came away, the bargain ended".

It was a fundamental principle of the Gradgrind philosophy, that everything was to be paid for. Nobody was ever on any account to give anybody anything, or render anybody help without purchase. Gratitude was to be abolished, and the virtues springing from it were not to be. Every inch of the existence of mankind, from birth to death, was to be a bargain across the counter. And if we didn't get to Heaven that way, it was not a politico-economical place, and we had no business there.

"I don't deny", added Bitzer, "that my schooling was cheap. But that comes right, sir. I was made in the cheapest market, and have to dispose of myself in the dearest" '.

Tom's escape is contrived, successfully in every sense, by means belonging to Dickensian high-fantastic comedy. And there follows the solemn moral of the whole fable, put with the rightness of genius into Mr. Sleary's asthmatic mouth. He, agent of the artist's marvellous tact, acquits himself of it characteristically:

' "Thquire, you don't need to be told that dogth ith

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wonderful animalth".

"Their instinct", said Mr. Gradgrind, "is surprising".

"Whatever you call it—and I'm bletht if I know what to call it"—said Sleary, "it ith athonithing. The way in which a dog'll find you—the dithtanthe he'll come!"

"His scent", said Mr. Gradgrind, "being so fine".

"I'm bletht if I know what to call it", repeated Sleary, shaking his head, "but I have had dogth find me, Thquire . . ."

—And Mr. Sleary proceeds to explain that Sissie's truant father is certainly dead because his performing dog, who would never have deserted him living, has come back to the Horse-riding:

"he wath lame, and pretty well blind. He went round to our children, one after another, ath if he wath a theeking for a child he knowed; and then he come to me, and throwed hithelf up behind, and thtood on his two fore-legth, weak as he wath, and then he wagged hith tail and died. Thquire, that dog was Merrylegth".

The whole passage has to be read as it stands in the text (Book III, c. VIII). Reading it there we have to stand off and reflect at a distance to recognize the potentialities that might have been realized elsewhere as Dickensian sentimentality. There is nothing sentimental in the actual effect. The profoundly serious intention is in control, the touch sure, and the structure that ensures the poise unassertively complex. Here is the formal moral:

' "Tho, whether her father bathely detherted her; or whether he broke hith own heart alone, rather than pull her down along with him; never will be known now, Thquire, till—no, not till we know how the dogth findth uth out!"

"She keeps the bottle that he sent her for, to this hour; and she will believe in his affection to the last moment of her life", said Mr. Gradgrind.

"It theemth to prethent two thingth to a perthon, don't it, Thquire?" said Mr. Sleary, musing as he looked down into the depths of his brandy-and-water: "one, that there ith a love in the world, not all Thelf-intereth after all, but thomething very different; t'other, that it hath a way of ith own of calculating or not calculating, whith thomehow or another ith at leatht ath hard to give a name to, ath the wayth of the dogth ith!"

Mr. Gradgrind looked out of the window, and made no reply. Mr. Sleary emptied his glass and recalled the ladies'.

It will be seen that the effect (I repeat, the whole passage must be read), apparently so simple and easily right, depends upon a subtle interplay of diverse elements, a multiplicity in unison of timbre and tone. Dickens, we know, was a popular entertainer, but Flaubert never wrote anything approaching this in subtlety of achieved art. Dickens, of course, has a vitality that we don't look for in Flaubert. Shakespeare was a popular entertainer we

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

reflect—not too extravagantly, we can surely tell ourselves, as we ponder passages of this characteristic quality in their relation, a closely organized one, to the poetic whole.

Criticism, of course, has its points to make against *Hard Times*. It can be said of Stephen Blackpool, not only that he is too good and qualifies too consistently for the martyr's halo, but that he invites an adaptation of the objection brought, from the negro point of view, against Uncle Tom, which was to the effect that he was a white man's good nigger. And certainly it doesn't need a working-class bias to produce the comment that when Dickens comes to the Trade Unions his understanding of the world he offers to deal with betrays a marked limitation. There were undoubtedly professional agitators, and Trade Union solidarity was undoubtedly often asserted at the expense of the individual's rights, but it is a score against a work so insistently typical in intention that it should give the representative rôle to the agitator, Slackbridge, and make Trade Unionism nothing better than the pardonable error of the misguided and oppressed, and, as such, an agent in the martyrdom of the good workingman. (But to be fair we must remember the conversation between Bitzer and Mrs. Sparsit:

> ' "It is much to be regretted", said Mrs. Sparsit, making her nose more Roman and her eyebrows more Coriolanian in the strength of her severity, "that the united masters allow of any such class combination".
>
> "Yes, ma'am", said Bitzer.
>
> "Being united themselves, they ought one and all to set their faces against employing any man who is united with any other man" said Mrs. Sparsit.
>
> "They have done that, ma'am", returned Bitzer; "but it rather fell through, ma'am".
>
> "I do not pretend to understand these things", said Mrs. Sparsit with dignity. " . . . I only know that those people must be conquered, and that it's high time it was done, once for all" ').

Just as Dickens has no glimpse of the part to be played by Trade Unionism in bettering the conditions he deplores, so, though he sees there are many places of worship in Coketown, of various kinds of ugliness, he has no notion of the part played by religion in the life of nineteenth-century industrial England. The kind of self-respecting steadiness and conscientious restraint that he represents in Stephen did certainly exist on a large scale among the working-classes, and this is an important historical fact. But there would have been no such fact if those chapels described by Dickens had had no more relation to the life of Coketown than he shows them to have.

Again, his attitude to Trade Unionism is not the only expression of a lack of political understanding. Parliament for him is merely the 'national dust-yard', where the 'national dustmen' entertain one another 'with a great many noisy little fights among themselves', and appoint commissions which fill blue-books with

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dreary facts and futile statistics—of a kind that helps Gradgrind to 'prove that the Good Samaritan was a bad economist'.

Yet Dickens's understanding of Victorian civilization is adequate for his purpose; the justice and penetration of his criticism are unaffected. And his moral perception works in alliance with a clear insight into the English social structure. Mr. James Harthouse is necessary for the plot; but he too has his representative function. He has come to Coketown as a prospective parliamentary candidate, for 'the Gradgrind party wanted assistance in cutting the throats of the Graces', and they 'liked fine gentlemen; they pretended that they did not, but they did'. And so the alliance beween the old ruling class and the 'hard' men figures duly in the fable. This economy is typical. There is Mrs. Sparsit, for instance, who might seem to be there merely for the plot. But her 'husband was a Powler', a fact she reverts to as often as Bounderby to his mythical birth in a ditch; and the two complimentary opposites, when Mr. James Harthouse, who in his languid assurance of class-superiority doesn't need to boast, is added, form a trio that suggests the whole system of British snobbery.

But the packed richness of *Hard Times* is almost incredibly varied, and not all the quoting I have indulged in suggests it adequately. The final stress may fall on Dickens's command of word, phrase, rhythm and image: in ease and range there is surely no greater master of English except Shakespeare. This comes back to saying that Dickens is a great poet: his endless resource in felicitously varied expression is an extraordinary responsiveness to life. His senses are charged with emotional energy, and his intelligence plays and flashes in the quickest and sharpest perception. That is, his mastery of 'style' is of the only kind that matters—which is not to say that he hasn't a conscious interest in what can be done with words (consider that 'Coriolanian' above); many of his felicities could plainly not have come if there had not been, in the background, a habit of such interest. Take this, for instance:

> 'He had reached the neutral ground upon the outskirts of the town, which was neither town nor country, but either spoiled . . . '

But he is no more a stylist than Shakespeare; and his mastery of expression is most fairly suggested by stressing, not his descriptive evocations (there are some magnificent ones in *Hard Times*—the varied *décor* of the action is made vividly present, you can feel the velvety dust trodden by Mrs. Sparsit in her stealth, and feel the imminent storm), but his strictly dramatic felicities. Perhaps, however, 'strictly' is not altogether a good pointer, since Dickens is a master of his chosen art, and his mastery shows itself in the way in which he moves between less direct forms of the dramatic and the direct rendering of speech. Here is Mrs. Gradgrind dying (a cipher in the Gradgrind system, the poor creature has never really been alive):

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

'She had positively refused to take to her bed; on the ground that, if she did, she would never hear the last of it.

Her feeble voice sounded so far away in her bundle of shawls, and the sound of another voice addressing her seemed to take such a long time in getting down to her ears, that she might have been lying at the bottom of a well. The poor lady was nearer Truth than she ever had been: which had much to do with it.

On being told that Mrs. Bounderby was there, she replied, at cross purposes, that she had never called him by that name since he had married Louisa; and that pending her choice of an objectionable name, she had called him J; and that she could not at present depart from that regulation, not being yet provided with a permanent substitute. Louisa had sat by her for some minutes, and had spoken to her often, before she arrived at a clear understanding who it was. She then seemed to come to it all at once.

"Well, my dear", said Mrs. Gradgrind, "and I hope you are going on satisfactorily to yourself. It was all your father's doing. He set his heart upon it. And he ought to know".

"I want to hear of you, mother; not of myself".

"You want to hear of me, my dear? That's something new, I am sure, when anybody wants to hear of me. Not at all well, Louisa. Very faint and giddy".

"Are you in pain, dear mother?"

"I think there's a pain somewhere in the room", said Mrs. Gradgrind, "but I couldn't positively say that I have got it".

After this strange speech, she lay silent for some time.

. . . . . .

"But there is something—not an Ology at all—that your father has missed, or forgotten, Louisa. I don't know what it is. I have often sat with Sissy near me, and thought about it. I shall never get its name now. But your father may. It makes me restless. I want to write to him, to find out, for God's sake, what it is. Give me a pen, give me a pen".

Even the power of restlessness was gone, except from the poor head, which could just turn from side to side.

She fancied, however, that her request had been complied with, and that the pen she could not have held was in her hand. It matters little what figures of wonderful no-meaning she began to trace upon her wrappers. The hand soon stopped in the midst of them; the light that had always been feeble and dim behind the weak transparency, went out; and even Mrs. Gradgrind, emerged from the shadow in which man walketh and disquieteth himself in vain, took upon her the dread solemnity of the sages and patriarchs'.

With this kind of thing before us, we talk not of style but of dramatic creation and imaginative genius.

F. R. LEAVIS.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PROFESSOR CHADWICK AND ENGLISH STUDIES

[The reference in our last number to Professor H. M. Chadwick's contribution to English Studies at Cambridge went to Press just before his death. We are glad therefore to be able to print the following communication from one of his former pupils. —Ed.].

IT is a pity Chadwick did not live to read the acknowledgment to his work by the younger generation in the last number of *Scrutiny*, and I am tempted by the inadequacy of the obituary notices I've seen to try and put on record, in more detail, just what he did do for English studies, and how his work and personality affected his pupils. Particularly as a lot of nonsense has been put about suggesting that he *harmed* Anglo-Saxon studies by his peculiar views.

I see he started his career as a double-First Classic—what a native endowment he must have had to survive that plaster-of-Paris régime! But the first thing about him one noticed was how unacademic he was, the refreshing absence of that aura of anecdotes, social values and lack of real interest which is so discouraging to the young. His kindly eyes looked at once innocent and shrewd, he retained his Yorkshire accent, and always wore a Norfolk jacket and bicycling breeches costume. When I came up he was one of the very few educational influences a student of English was likely to encounter. It was before the two all-literature English Triposes were invented, and you took one comprehensive Eng. Lit. tripos ('English A') and some other tripos; if you liked, the section of the Archæology and Anthropology Tripos created by Chadwick, then called 'English B'.

Its conception and the way it was carried out were characteristic of the man. You can read his own account in his invaluable little book, *The Study of Anglo-Saxon* (Heffer, 1941). It's full of good things, written with the disinterestedness, good sense and intelligent insight he brought to bear on all subjects, but it's particularly the last chapter, 'The Future of Anglo-Saxon Studies', which is important for the English student. Here you can see why he so annoyed orthodox academics; starting from observation and his experience as a teacher, he explains with shocking candour that, since few students have any gift for philology, compulsory philology and history-of-language courses are 'futile'. This came with peculiar force from the man who had started his academic career as a classical philologist. He goes on to argue that philology is 'a great hindrance to Anglo-Saxon studies':

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> 'The subject appeals to a very small proportion of the students, according to my experience. They should have the opportunity of taking it, at least as a subject for post-graduate study—for which it is best suited. But it is unreasonable to force it upon every student. It is no more necessary for the study of Anglo-Saxon that it is for that of Latin or Greek or a modern foreign language. The connection with (later) English studies has led to a very great increase in the number of people who have at least some knowledge of Anglo-Saxon. English literature is now one of the most popular subjects in our Universities; and in most of them Anglo-Saxon is, or has been, a more or less compulsory element in the course. As to the value of this connection for either subject, my own experience has been that, when Anglo-Saxon is compulsory, it is disliked, and the students gain little or nothing from it. On the other hand, when it is optional, the number who take it is very small—not more than one in ten—but these usually rather like it, if philology is eliminated, and most of them gain thereby. To force it upon a larger number of students is, in my experience, a mere waste of time for both student and teacher. Most of the students regard it as a nuisance'.

Worse, he goes on to argue 'in the interests of Anglo-Saxon studies' that

> 'There are serious objections, however, to any scheme which involves an exclusive or even primary connection of Anglo-Saxon with English studies. The latter do not afford a good training for the former; and in Universities where this connection has ceased it is found that the majority of our best students come from other subjects than English. For Anglo-Saxon studies some inclination for the acquisition of languages and a wider historical outlook are desirable; English studies are too limited in their scope. Indeed, the two subjects appeal to different kinds of mind'.

It is all too true, in fact indisputable, but how unprofessional to admit, even to notice, anything of the sort, in what bad taste to announce it from the house-tops! Compulsory Anglo-Saxon, philology and history-of-language courses attached to the popular English Literature degree-studies make jobs for specialists, provide subjects that can be *taught*, lectured and examined on mechanically (no nonsense about education, but just that 'factual matter' which somehow provides 'discipline')—surely that is all the justification needed. But Chadwick was perverse enough to uphold the interests not of professionals but of Anglo-Saxon studies—of which he, after all, held the Chair. He insisted that Anglo-Saxon should be studied in his university in its proper context, in association with the early history and antiquities of the country and in comparison with early Scandinavian studies similarly organized—that is, he made it a study of early civilizations. He wanted to do for our own early culture something comparable to what the Classical Tripos does for

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the early history of Greece and Rome, to provide a unified study which should be truly educational. 'The number of students who will take such a course as this', he writes, 'will doubtless be small—at least until the importance of our early history is more generally recognized. At present the only way of getting a large number of students to learn Anglo-Saxon is by making it a more or less compulsory subject in a popular course—*e.g.*, by making it impossible to obtain a degree in English without it. I have had experience of both systems, and have no hesitation in expressing my preference for the one which will secure a few keen students, who choose the course of their own free will, and will in all probability derive real benefit from it'.

Well, a lot of 'English' students did opt for Chadwick's scheme nevertheless, and, as he says, got real benefit from it. His tripos opened for us the doors into archæology, anthropology, sociology, pre-history, early architecture—all beginnings for future self-education, and he saw to it that these subjects, studied with reference to Scandinavia and England, should also extend to the Celtic and Mediterranean areas, opening fresh vistas. The interest and profit were inexhaustible. We didn't, under him and his colleagues, go through the philological grind ('an exercise of memory and faith' as he contemptuously describes it) and we didn't 'get up' Anglo-Saxon as a meaningless adjunct to mediaeval and modern English literature. Nor did we have to study *Beowulf* under the hypocritical pretence that it is great poetry; we used it as an interesting document. Anglo-Saxon literature, studied in connection with Old Norse literature in particular and other early literatures in general, gave us an insight into the origins of literature (his own 3-vol. work on this subject, *The Growth of Literature*, shows the breadth of his base). And this was only part of the larger scheme, in which the early literatures of Northern Europe and Great Britain were studied, not snatched out of their context as literatures nearly always are, but as part of their inseparable background, the cultures that produced them. This meant that anyone working under Chadwick had to study the history, archæology, literature, arts, social life and so forth of Northern Europe from the Beaker period to the Norman Conquest; in fact, Northern Europe from the end of the Stone Age to the end of the Dark Ages was conceived and treated as a continuous cultural study. Of course this was a lot even for two years, but it was assumed that the student had special aptitudes. Most students grumbled and groaned when they were launched on two new languages at once, plus a terrifying syllabus which included the entire literatures of Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse, but all retracted later, for Chadwick's method made one take the merely memory work in one's stride—it was not going to be examined on for its own sake—and he was a remarkable teacher as well as a great scholar: the true original mind that can organize knowledge. He got together a good team too, which included Dame Bertha Phil-potts, the authority on the Viking Age. Many look back on the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

two years they spent with him as the most valuable and formative period of their intellectual life. The effect of such a boldly conceived course of study was evident in the rapid maturing of the students. His system was the opposite of the spoon-feeding method that the modern universities adopt towards their students.

He and his tripos were wonderfully stimulating. There were drawbacks, of course. He was himself a linguistic genius, and as his students used to complain, he apparently thought that everyone is born with a knowledge of runes, Celtic languages and Old High German; but when his attention was drawn to this misunderstanding, he was always very patient and considerate. He was not a theoretical educationist but he could see what is educational and what is not. Nor was he a writer on his special studies who could give them a wide appeal, like W. P. Ker. He was simply a teacher and scholar who had hatched an educational idea and felt its value enough to be stubborn about preserving it. Obviously a strain of the publicist in his composition would have helped to promote his ends, and would have made him able to place his discovery and his methods before the educational world in a more persuasive light. He was too single-minded to be able or willing to grapple with academic politics. He complains: 'An unfortunate feature of University life to-day is that the time and energy which should go to teaching and research has to be spent in committee rooms'. But it is the academic with no vocation for teaching—with nothing to teach—who enjoys the power that can be exercised in committee rooms.

To sum up his achievement: He provided a course of study in itself highly educational. He showed how literary and linguistic studies could be made most profitable, by successfully correlating them with their social background—a very different matter from the scrappy 'Life and Thought' courses which are the inadequate gestures the English Tripos makes in a half-hearted effort to provide a similar organization for mediaeval and modern literature. (Just as his system of comparative study of early literature differs from the oddments of Italian and French set-book that the English Faculty Board piously hopes, one supposes, will do the trick for English literature). After taking Chadwick's 'English B', those who proceeded to 'English A' realized what an opportunity was lost in the handling—or rather, lack of handling—of Mediaeval Literature and 'Life and Thought', even though the English School enjoyed the services of Dr. Coulton. Moreover, Chadwick certainly showed how literary studies could be linked up with that school of sociological studies which Cambridge so notoriously lacks. In addition, he of course very considerably furthered Anglo-Saxon studies by getting texts edited and books written, by his pupils and friends as well as himself, and by getting them considered in the larger and more fruitful light he brought to bear on them.

But the professor of Anglo-Saxon who had given evidence before a Board of Education committee that 'It cannot be too clearly recognized that compulsory philology is the natural and

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mortal enemy of humanistic studies' and that the literary interest of Anglo-Saxon is 'not so great as to repay students of modern literature for the time they will have to spend in acquiring a sufficient mastery of the language to appreciate it'[1] . . . had to pay the penalty for his disinterestedness. He had insisted on taking his subject seriously and his position as an educationist responsibly, instead of accepting both conventionally, and he was always aware of official opposition. It was true he already had, and so was secure in, the Chair. But an obscure movement, of which we shall never know the exact history, seemed to him to threaten his life-work all along, and it has taken on fresh vigour since his retirement in 1940. In his book on *The Study of Anglo-Saxon* he refers to 'authorities responsible for English' who 'wish to acquire control over Anglo-Saxon studies' and that such a scheme of his 'meets with much opposition. The teaching staff may be unanimous in its favour, and the students may be well satisfied and keen, but opposition or interference may come from persons or committees who have no knowledge of Anglo-Saxon studies, but who may think that their own interests may be affected in some way by such a scheme'. Presumably some not very creditable episode of academic history led Chadwick twenty years ago to remove his studies and himself from the English Faculty to the school of Archæology and Anthropology, which in the person of Dr. A. C. Haddon received him with open arms. That great man and he were two of a kind. Haddon must have been a fertilizing influence for him as well as a congenial presence and an ally. One knew what the academic 'English' attitude to Chadwick's scheme was, from the tone in which it was mentioned: resentment. The desire to undo Chadwick's work is one sign of that hatred of life which academic history illustrates in so many ways. For Chadwick was a rare instance of what is supposed to be typical academic disinterestedness but what the academic milieu is instinctively hostile to. No doubt, under the plea of 'getting Anglo-Saxon back into the English Tripos', his work on the other side, as to which he was equally firm, that of freeing English students from compulsory linguistic and philological cram, will be undone, and, in his own words, 'the herding of masses of students along familiar lines, some of which are barren and useless enough' will be resumed some day—in whose interest? Not the students', assuredly, as Chadwick has shown, at any rate.

[1] *The Teaching of English in England*, H.M. Stationery Office, 1921.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CORRESPONDENCE

DEAR SIR,

I have a high respect for *Scrutiny's* reviews; the one on Aragon, for example, was admirable as a corrective to recent uncritical adulation. I would however like to question the estimate of Apollinaire by G. D. Klingopulos in the last issue. I am sure your reviewer is right about Professor Bowra's preface and the biography by André Rouveyre, but you will agree that a poet should not be judged by the excesses of his friends. I have not read the complete works of Apollinaire, but one book of his, *Alcools*, I have had for fifteen years and have re-read at intervals. After Mr. Klingopulos, I went back to *Alcools* to see if after all I had been deluded as to their quality. But I seem to detect that in this case Apollinaire has been used as a whipping-horse for 'modish gallophils'.

Mr. Klingopulos compares certain images in Apollinaire with the 'patient etherized upon a table'. Eliot's image, on the first page of *Poems* 1909-1925, is curiously unlike any other in his work that I can recall. It has indeed few parallels but oddly enough there is one in *Alcools*, in a poem dated 1909. (*Poème Lu au Mariage d'André Salmon*):

> Nous nous sommes rencontrés dans un caveau maudit
> Au temps de notre jeunesse
> Fumant tous deux et mal vêtus attendant l'aube
> Épris épris des mêmes paroles dont it faudra changer le sens
> Trompés trompés pauvres petits et ne sachant pas encore rire
> La table et les deux verres devinrent un mourant qui nous
> jeta le dernier regard d'Orphée.

The last line has been quoted in France about as often as the 'patient etherized' in England. It dates from the same period and has had rather the same function. It seems to satisfy Mr. Klingopulos' requirements in a 'surprising image'.

I would not claim that Apollinaire is as substantial a poet as Eliot, but he is certainly on a par with such writers as Verhaeren and Laforgue, who directly influenced both Eliot and Pound. All were engaged in inventing a poetry consistent with modern urban life. This involved experiment both in style and content. When Apollinaire referred, *e.g.*, to aeroplanes, he was still writing in the dawn of twentieth-century technology. The Futurist school had yet to appear, and the 'future' which it hailed had yet to unfold. The references to modernity in Apollinaire are not (in spite of Mr. Klingopulos) strictly comparable in tone with those of Stephen Spender to pylons. They have admittedly something in common with Walt Whitman, whose rugged and peculiar example had a big effect in France and of whom Pound himself admitted: 'We have one sap and one root'. The Whitmanesque effusiveness was modified in transit, but the rhapsodic form, the strings of images,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

are to be found in Apollinaire (and indeed in Eliot) with a more melancholy inflection and without Whitman's whole-hearted optimistic acceptance. Apollinaire is nearer to Whitman in being more cheerful than Eliot about the new phenomena. He can write about a street in Paris 'J'aime la grâce de cette rue industrielle' though when he wrote about London (in 1903) it sounds more like Eliot's 'vision of the street':

> Au tournant d'une rue brûlant
> De tous les feux de ses façades
> Plaies du brouillard sanguinolent.

Perhaps no poet of this century has yet come off unhurt in the struggle over style and content. In Eliot's case the imagery of the London street, so dominant in all his poetry up to and including 'The Waste Land', has latterly receded, leaving, to my mind, a singularly beautiful style unsupported by an adequate content. Apollinaire on his side has a diffuseness of style which makes it easy to quote weak passages. There are similar weaknesses even in Baudelaire, and even in his best poems—'Le Cygne' for example. It needed the efforts of Mallarmé in French, as of Pound in English, to eliminate stylistic weakness, and it was done at the price of over-condensation and an increasingly esoteric content. It has not so far been possible to combine in one poet the dual capacity for enlarged experience and verbal precision which would meet contemporary exigencies. Apollinarie made a contribution to the enlarging of the poetic 'lebensraum' which does not deserve to be dismissed as 'puerile', 'ingenuous' or 'commonplace'. I think, perhaps, that in Mr. Klingopulos' assessment it is his sense of period that is at fault. He should reserve his strictures for those who have failed to learn the lessons of Pound and Eliot, of Mallarmé and Valéry, rather than apply them to those who helped to break new ground.

Yours sincerely,

CHARLES MADGE.

Our reviewer comments:

Bad poetry has, of course, a period interest (*e.g.*, poésie de la résistance—Aragon). I'm glad Mr. Madge agrees with me about some things, though we should differ about the 'content' of Mr. Eliot's later poems. But his letter would have been even more interesting had he, equipped with a 'sense of period', offered another reading of my long quotations which included one complete poem; in relation to which, my adjectives 'puerile', 'lurid' and 'commonplace', have, I think, some meaning. As it is, *his* grounds for dismissing Professor Bowra's valuation are difficult to understand.

G.D.K.

Another letter, criticizing *Scrutiny*, has been held over for lack of space.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

REHABILITATING IBSEN

IBSEN, THE INTELLECTUAL BACKGROUND, by Brian W. Downs (*Cambridge University Press,* 10/6).

IBSEN THE NORWEGIAN, A REVALUATION, by M. C. Bradbrook (*Chatto and Windus,* 10/6).

There are signs of a general revival of interest in Ibsen. One hears rumours of a new translation on the way, and there seems to be a growing feeling that we need a more adequate critical account than that provided by Shaw and Archer, with their emphasis on social and moral problems, or even by Mr. Janko Lavrin. The two books under review are very differently placed in relation to this movement of opinion, and their aims are as diverse as their methods.

For Mr. Downs it is not a question of rehabilitating Ibsen. He shows no recognition—perhaps chooses to ignore the possibility—that anything of the kind may be needed. Assuming general agreement that Ibsen is 'a very great author, one of the supreme dramatists of all time', he makes it clear that he is offering neither literary criticism nor biography, but only a study of the historical, social and cultural background of the plays. The result is a piece of painstaking and solid scholarship which will be of interest mainly to those who share the initial assumption. These accounts of Ibsen's literary education, his contacts with public life, his relation to Scandinavianism and Norwegian nationalism, the influence upon him of Kierkegaard, Bjornson and Brandes, and his attitude to the typical nineteenth-century problems of evolution, heredity, sex, feminism and the early psychology of the unconscious, may be of use to the critic who has made his own approach to the dramas as literature. Mr. Downs says that Ibsen's development is not fully comprehensible without a knowledge of his background; it may be so, but knowledge of this kind must subserve, and cannot replace, criticism. In itself it cannot help to answer the prior question why at this date Ibsen's work is important to us at all. There is nothing in this book to help the unconverted who ask for some demonstration that Ibsen's ideas have been successfully translated into art. Its interest lies therefore within very narrow limits and its conscientious thoroughness is not helped by a rather dull and heavy style.

Even a study so exclusively concerned with background, however, is liable on the one hand to betray critical preconceptions, and on the other to suggest critical observations. The implied

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

critical attitude of Mr. Downs seems to be not so very different from that of Archer and Shaw: that is, he stresses the 'problem' aspect of the plays from *A Doll's House* onwards, and seems to think that Ibsen embraced wholeheartedly Brandes' theory that literature should 'submit problems to debate'. He seems, indeed, to draw no special distinction between the four last plays and their immediate predecessors. Whether or not we agree with this attitude, it is not quite the line on which the latest defences of Ibsen are conducted: Miss Bradbrook's approach, as we shall see, is rather different. As for the criticisms implied incidentally, examples may be found in the observation that the plays show a pathological abhorrence of physical passion, and, more significantly, in the reference to 'his skill for putting the full onus of interpretation on the reader' (the ending of *Peer Gynt* is under discussion) which might suggest a radical ambiguity here and perhaps in other works.[1]

Miss Bradbrook's book is explicitly a revaluation, and she is out to convert those to whom the arguments of the older Ibsenites make no appeal. She too is concerned to put Ibsen back into his setting of Norwegian culture and history, but since her approach is that of the literary critic she bases her main argument on his actual use of language, in prose and verse alike:

> 'For Ibsen's prose is dramatic, which means that in balance, movement and rhythm it is adapted for speaking: and it is literature, which means that it is built upon the natural virtues of the tongue and upon Ibsen's personal idiom as he fashioned it to his needs. His writing can be understood only in terms of the Norse, with its clear, pungent but concrete vocabulary, it strong live metaphors . . . its lack of reverberation or overtones . . . His translators . . . were not concerned with the poetic use of language or with those sides of Ibsen's genius which were rooted in his race: his humour, which was exuberant and ironical, his lyricism, his melancholy and his piety. Swift, Burns and Emily Brontë shaken up together in a bag might produce something resembling Ibsen. The dehydrated Ibsen who is known through the translations has little in common with any of the three'.

When the claim is presented in this way it is difficult for anyone whose knowledge of Ibsen depends on Archerese—'the translator's equivalent of Basic English'—to comment without embarrassment. But since this book is presumably intended for readers who have no Norse, and sets out to persuade them of Ibsen's greatness, it may be permissible for one of them to attempt to say how far the argument carries conviction.

---

[1]Mr. Downs thinks that any 'salvation of Peer by Solveig' (an interpretation which he admits cannot be ruled out) goes far to stultify the rest of the play: Miss Bradbrook seems to accept it. Shaw thought *Brand* a simple satire on idealism: Croce complains that we are left in doubt.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

An objection must be made first to what seems an illegitimate method of persuasion: a tendency to compare Ibsen on almost every page with the greatest names in literature. Even when there is a particular point to be made in the comparison one feels that it has the secondary effect of building up a feeling of special respect for Ibsen in the reader's mind, and sometimes that seems to be its main function—rather like reiterated imagery in an Elizabethan play. A few examples will illustrate this tendency:

> 'These plays correspond in Ibsen's career to that period when Shakespeare was shaping his art in the chronicles . . .'
>
> 'Ibsen and Tolstoy were incomparably the greatest literary figures of their time . . . '
>
> '[Peer Gynt] lies upon the earth as naked and despairing as Timon of Athens'.
>
> 'The unrelenting cohesion of *A Doll's House* is perhaps, like that of *Oedipus the King*, too hard on the playgoer . . .'
>
> 'The potency and power of the wild duck is that of the ghost in *Hamlet* or the witches in *Macbeth*: it unites and concentrates the implications which lie behind the action of individuals'.
>
> 'Architecturally he never produced anything so harmonious: it is his most Sophoclean play. [*Rosmerholm*].
>
> 'The four last plays of Ibsen are as sharply divided from his earlier work as the four last plays of Shakespeare'.
>
> 'But Shakespeare and Ibsen can make the lightest word so inevitably in character that without need for the conscious implication of *A Doll's House* or the retrospective complexities of *Rosmersholm* every word can bear directly on the revelation of what the play is *about*, every word can have structural as well as local force'. [On *Bygmester Solness*].

The greater the stress laid on these flattering comparisons, however, the less justified they appear, and one is left with a feeling that the claim for Ibsen's greatness is over-reaching itself. This is particularly so of the comment on the last few words of Rosmer and Rebekke before their suicide:

> 'There is a sense of an intolerable strain being resolved, as in the union of Antony and Cleopatra.
>
> Husband, I come!
> Now to that name my courage prove my title.
>
> Rebekke, who is too often thought of as a mixture of George Sand and Marie Bashkirtseff, really had more in her of royal Egypt. She came from Finmark, land of trolls and land of witches'.

Yet for all the talk of Rebekke as 'quick and fierce as a tigress' until her conquest by Rosmer's nobility ('Cleopatra fell in love with Hamlet') and of the free and joyous acceptance of their common

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

destiny as comparable to the stoicism of Clermont d'Ambois or Siward's valediction to his son, it is difficult to see that the analysis of the play given by Miss Bradbrook really leads to so striking a conclusion. A re-reading of the play confirms the feeling that whatever allowances should be made for the 'Basic English' it is still extremely remote from Shakespeare. Can it be merely poor translation which sets Rebekke's hopeless account of her action:

> 'And yet I *could* not stop. I had to venture just the least little bit further. Only one hairsbreadth more. And then one more—and always one more—and then it happened—That is the way such things come about'.

on such a completely different plane from any comparable speech in Shakespeare?—say, Macbeth's

> My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,
> Shakes so my single state of man that function
> Is smother'd in surmise, and nothing is
> But what is not.

Miss Bradbrook's conclusions are doubtless not so simple as I may have suggested, but comparisons of this kind have at least equivocal implications, and this may be some excuse for putting one's queries rather crudely and baldly.

Miss Bradbrook's general classification of Ibsen's work is shown in her chapter-headings: 'The Poet' deals with the non-dramatic verse, *Love's Comedy*, *Brand* and *Peer Gynt*; 'The Moralist' with the plays from *Emperor and Galilean* to *An Enemy of the People*; 'The Humanist' with *The Wild Duck*, *The Sea Woman*, *Rosmersholm* and *Hedda Gabler*; and 'The Visionary' with the last four plays. It will be seen that the 'problem-play' conception is as far as possible avoided. We are not asked to accept the Ibsen of Brandes, Shaw and Archer: '*Peer Gynt* is a more serious work than *Ghosts*', and Ibsen's 'reputation as a sort of Jeremiah of the Enlightenment was certainly a libel'.

The account of *Brand* seems fair enough, though Miss Bradbrook admits the absence of any final resolution of the moral problem 'since the Voice which proclaims the God of Love speaks from the obliterating avalanche'. At one point she does indeed suggest a possible resolution at the deepest level, invoking section IV of *Little Gidding*: if there is an implied comparison in terms of the verse one can hardly decide its validity from a translation; if not, then the connection via Kierkegaard, in terms of 'philosophy', is altogether too abstract to be of much significance. On *Peer Gynt* she accepts the interpretation that Peer is saved through Solveig's love, admitting that it would be 'overwhelmingly sentimental' if it were not so strongly controlled. For an account of the nature of this control, however, we are simply referred to all that has gone before, with the comment: 'Solveig remains enskyed and sainted in a play where Anitra receives the tribute from Goethe'. (*'Das ewige weibliche zieht uns an!'*). The chief power of the play is

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

said to be in its 'fulness and richness of ordinary life'.

For *A Doll's House* the best case possible is made, as the Norwegian version of 'the great theme of late nineteenth-century literature throughout Europe, the sufferings of women in a masculine world: the theme of *Anna Karenina*, and *Madame Bovary*, of *The Egoist*, *Tess of the D'Urbevilles* and *Portrait of a Lady*' (a not obviously pertinent generalization about these very different works: nor is the particular comparison with *Anna Karenina* very convincing). Its chief virtue is seen in a Ibsen's discovery of a personal prose style, using Norse with a new concentration to embody an artist's vision of 'a problem of human nature in general', but it is admitted to be limited, though impressive. *Ghosts* is said to be not a tragedy but an exposition of the materialist's nightmare—'the dice are loaded, as they are in *Jude the Obscure* or *A Shropshire Lad*'—with an underlying conviction of complete pessimism—'all mankind has failed'.

In *The Wild Duck*, *The Sea Woman*, *Rosmersholm* and *Hedda Gabler*, life, says Miss Bradbrook, is always set against systems of thought, however advanced, and Ibsen is always 'for the complex as against the simple solution': his subject is 'human relationships in the fullest sense'. Most people have felt *The Wild Duck* to be Ibsen's most successful work, from 1903, when Yeats allowed that it possessed 'emotion of multitude', downwards.[2] Miss Bradbrook, following Virginia Woolf in *The Death of the Moth*, speaks of it as showing Ibsen's power 'to infuse the particular, drab, limited fact with a halo and a glory'. Her account of the vitality in the presentation of the Ekdals is interesting, but the terms of her general praise of the play themselves raise doubts: 'Like *Hamlet*, *The Wild Duck* can be interpreted by each man in his own image . . . One day it will read as a tragedy, the next as the harshest irony . . . '. Isn't this in itself a criticism?—isn't it, on another level, a criticism of *Hamlet* too? But the least satisfactory part of *The Wild Duck* seems to me the treatment of Gregers Werle, who is too much of a caricature to be convincing or to bear the weight imposed on him: it is not merely that his catch-phrases are dated by the translation. *Rosmersholm*, 'Ibsen's most perfectly balanced play', has been glanced at above. Miss Bradbrook expatiates on the Norse inheritance of the supernatural going back to the Eddas in connection with the white horses who symbolize the spirits of the dead (and similarly with the spectres in *Ghosts*, trolls in *Bygmester Solness* and warlocks in *The Sea Woman*) but it is difficult to believe that all this is really there in the play. Perhaps there is an essential incongruity between these references and the naturalistic dialogue and technique. *Hedda Gabler* is described as 'savage comedy' of the type of *Volpone* and *Le Tartuffe*: this is better than the old attempts to see it as a

[2]The most persuasive analysis I have seen is the article by the late Miss M. W. Kelly, printed in the Winter, 1946, number of *The Welsh Review*.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tragedy, but surely the lack of any positive values, presented or implied—Miss Bradbrook underlines their absence—marks it off as something very different from *Volpone*. In Jonson a firm grasp of positive values is implied in the weighty sobriety of the verse and the ironical undertone qualifying Volpone's extravagances. *Hedda Gabler* has a completely negative attitude: the question is whether this does not pervade more of Ibsen than Miss Bradbrook would admit, and whether it is not a serious qualification of his 'greatness'.[3]

Ibsen's last plays are described as reverting to the technique of the early lyrics, in an attempt to deal more directly with his own inner problems and needs, and are said to be written in descending order of dramatic greatness, *When We Dead Wake* being not really a play at all, but rather a personal testament. All involve remorse of conscience, the impossibility of restitution, and a recognition, which brings death, of having made the wrong choice. I find it difficult to follow Miss Bradbrook's analysis of *Bygmester Solness*. It is right, no doubt, to put aside the old interpretations in terms of hypnotism, rebellious daughters and Solness as Gladstone or Bismark or Ibsen himself (and perhaps also the more recent ones in terms of Freudian symbolism). It may be less misleading to see the play as focussed principally in Act II, the 'great lyric centrepiece', 'a sustained love duet in the manner of *Tristan*', with Age and Youth lured on by the same castle in the air to have seen which is 'worth the price of the fall'. But one is not convinced: the signs point in too many directions at once (one aspect of Hilde, for example, seems related to Hedda Gabler or the unregenerate Rebekke). And is it, again, merely the question of inadequate translation which makes this seem excessive?—'His speech can rise till, like that of the great Elizabethan characters, it becomes the full voice, the total exposition of the play: yet it does not cease to be Solness who speaks'. Isn't there a discrepancy between the symbolism and the whole naturalistic technique? (Miss Bradbrook herself suggests that the winding-up of the play suffers on the representational stage). Borkman's hymn to the spirits of the mine seems similarly unconvincing, but this, we are told, is 'poetry but not drama'. This play and *Little Eyolf* are admitted to be unequal, and *When We Dead Wake* is described as Ibsen's tragic palinode, 'a condemnation of all that he had written since he turned his back on poetry and Norway'.

Ibsen the Norwegian is the most thorough and sustained attempt that has yet been made to apply modern critical ideas to its subject. If it fails to persuade us to accept its conclusions, that is because of a gap between the analysis and the judgments. Miss Bradbrook removes many obstacles and misconceptions, showing us a recognizably serious artist at work, but there is nothing in her picture to establish Ibsen's claim to rank with Tolstoy or Shakes-

[3]Croce speaks of Ibsen's work as 'a poetry of complete pessimism'.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

peare—or even, one feels, with Emily Brontë or George Eliot. Yeats's objections are out of fashion—Miss Bradbrook dismisses them as an outmoded reaction of the 'companions of the Cheshire Cheese', and Mr. Forster's comments in *Abinger Harvest* may perhaps be dismissed as not altogether serious. But the following paragraph from one of Henry James's letters written in 1893—it is quoted by Professor Peacock in *The Poet in the Theatre*—seems to sum up the case against Ibsen in a more damaging, because more serious and more balanced way:

> 'Yes, Ibsen is ugly, common, hard, prosaic, bottomlessly bourgeois—and with his distinction so far *in*, as it were, so behind doors and beyond vestibules, that one is excusable for not pushing one's way to it. And yet of his art he's a master—and I feel in him, to the pitch of almost intolerable boredom, the presence and insistence of life. On the other hand, his mastery, so bare and lean as it is, couldn't count nearly as much in any medium in which the genus was otherwise represented. In *our* sandy desert even this translated octopus (excuse my confusion of habitats!!) sits alone, and isn't kept in his place by relativity'.

R. G. Cox.

ROOM FOR DOUBT?

MR. BOTTRALL'S SELECTED POEMS

SELECTED POEMS, by Ronald Bottrall, with a Preface by Edith Sitwell (*Poetry London*, 4/6).

The most interesting poems written by Mr. Bottrall since 1932 have already appeared in these pages. The three collections of poems, *Festivals of Fire* (1934), *The Turning Path* (1939), *Farewell and Welcome* (1945), have all been sympathetically and conscientiously reviewed in *Scrutiny*: *The Loosening and Other Poems* (1931) was given honourable mention by Mr. Leavis in *New Bearings*. Mr. Bottrall has been treated as a considerable poet. *Selected Poems* now provides the occasion for a survey of the *œuvre* as it stands at present and for confirming or challenging the consensus of opinion about the value of the poems and the grounds for feeling hopeful of Mr. Bottrall's further development.

In trying to account at this distance for the very favourable *accueil The Loosening* received in 1931, one is struck by the comparative chill in the general climate to-day and inclined to wonder at the optimism 'in the air' during the years just before and after 1930. Mr. Richards perhaps represented an extreme when he wrote, 'The view that what we need in this tempestuous turmoil of change is a Rock to shelter under or to cling to, rather than an efficient aeroplane in which to ride it, is comprehensible but

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mistaken'. At any rate the poets who first came before the public when Mr. Eliot was writing the *Ariel* poems could appeal to a general sense that the younger generation stood a better chance of weathering the difficult conditions than the 'ageing eagle'.

The relevant passage in *New Bearings* reads: 'It is perhaps not extravagant to conjecture that this difference (between Mr. Bottrall and Mr. Eliot) is representative; that we have here the voice of a generation that is, as it were, becoming acclimatized, or, to change the metaphor, acquiring new habits of equilibrium or learning to swim. The positive energy may be felt in Mr. Bottrall's rhythms even when they express frustration and undirectedness. And it comes out explicitly again and again in something towards which his poetry as a whole is seen to move'. To this Mr. Harding rejoined, 'It is difficult to believe that Bottrall's extra buoyancy and "positive energy" were not within Eliot's spiritual compass, but that Eliot saw their limitations and so had to make a less direct approach to assurance. It may be, as Mr. Leavis suggests, a representative difference between the generations; but it seems possible that it is a difference between greater insight and less. The question can be answered only by Bottrall's future work'.

The *Loosening* volume, has not, it seems to me, been dwarfed by the subsequent work and deserves re-examination. The reader interested in Mr. Bottrall's poetry will be glad to learn that all the *pièces justificatives* are reprinted in *Selected Poems*. They are pre-eminently poems which move towards positive concluding acts of faith. Here are some examples:

> We own the natural ecstasy of the tree
> Shooting sap into its branches, a finger-tip awareness
> Of ourselves as a divided whole. The life of being
> Is ours, since we have bridged the gulf
> And, twin-circuited, hold
> Its electricity imprisoned within us.
>
> (*S.P.* p. 20).

> There is yet time . . .
> Time to call up Eros armed to his new Psychean task
> Of mobilising moving dunes of grainèd sand
> Into an adamantine pyramid
> Rising upward, upward.
>
> (*S.P.* p. 14).

> The waters are lifting at length . . .
> Perchance . . .
> we have tracked
> What song the sirens sang. So may the disjoint
> Time resolve itself and raise up dolphins backed
> Like whales to waft us where a confident sea
> Is ever breaking, never spent.
>
> (*S.P.* p. 16).

> Not for nothing was I born
> Within earshot of that iron sea, where

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Across the hedge the calf milked
Its mother astride the webbed dew and the share
Yearly uptore fresh paths beckoning the seed
To a resurrection.

(*S.P.* p. 23).

They are all, it will be noted, statements, saying not doing. Their power to convince, Mr. Leavis suggests, lies in the rhythm and the imagery. And if we look at *Salute to them that know*, for instance, we see that the climax is built up steadily, in a straight line, as it were, from other statements, statements about matters of accepted fact. Mr. Bottrall is an undoubted master of neat formulation of the 'cultural situation'.

We are dismembered
Into a myriad broken shadows,
Each to himself reflected in a splinter of that glass
Which we once knew as cosmos . . .

The tone and the concision give this and similar observations full weight. They provide the contemporary reader with as much pleasure, presumably, as was obtained by the contemporary reader of, say,

Our little systems have their day;
They have their day and cease to be:
They are but broken lights of thee . . .

I am not, however, convinced that the strength, adequacy and poise exhibited in Mr. Bottrall's preliminary statements are such as to lend power to the conclusions which are credit letters drawn on the future.

Mr. Bottrall has been praised for his technique. There is no doubt that by understudying[2] Pound and Eliot instead of Joyce and Valéry he early acquired a manner quite distinguishably personal. Mr. Bottrall stands up remarkably well to local analysis and passes the contemporary tests for craftsmanship. But when we examine the total organization of the more ambitious poems, such as the *Loosening*, the 'positive' ending seems merely added on. It is noteworthy that only detached passages of this poem are reprinted in the present selection.

Festivals of Fire made many of the minor poems in the previous volume look juvenile. Mr. Bottrall, that is, was rapidly increasing the number of 'effects' he could produce. On the other hand, as could be seen from an article he published in *Scrutiny* in September, 1933, Mr. Bottrall wrote the title poem without having made the radical criticism of Pound's *Cantos*. In this volume Mr. Bottrall appears very much as a 'split man'. To write the verse of the best parts of this volume required qualities of intelligence and self-

[2]I presume 'understanding' *S.P.* p. 11 is a misprint.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

criticism well above the average, quite apart from the virtuoso ability shown in the adaptation of *procédés* taken from Pound and Eliot. But the fundamental attitudes exhibited in these poems are remarkably crude and even naïve. Furthermore, Mr. Bottrall seems to have great difficulty in presenting his own experience in an unembarrassed form. A notable example in the *Festivals* volume is the account of his motor accident.

The radical criticism of the title poem was made by Mr. Leavis in a review (*Scrutiny*, Vol. III, No. 1). This time he points out the factitious nature of the climax. But apart from 'riveted', the whole movement is strikingly similar to the sweeping closes of the earlier poems. 'The resort to anthropology is justified in a realization of the Life theme—unity, continuity and renewal, in a communicated sense of the mystery, potent enough to make an implicit criticism on the mechanico-communistic salvationism of the conclusion'. I have re-read the first section of the poem with this observation in mind, without, however, receiving the sense of the mystery of life. Mr. Leavis at this date was still hopeful of Mr. Bottrall's development.

To judge by the verse reprinted in *Selected Poems*, *The Turning Path* must have represented a sobering and painful transitional stage in Mr. Bottrall's development. The difficulties he has always had in dealing directly with his personal predicament seem to have increased. There is something second-hand and blurred about

> Then we put on an oval mask, bordered by aeons,
> Fluttered supercilious lids among sketched
> Insinuations and a wry mouth. We exchanged
> The child's eye that invests every tenterhook
> Moment with long-drawn surprise for a spendthrift
> Vigilance, and sagely nodded as we watched
> Each filament of time take fire, spurt out
> In girandoles and blacken to eternal tarnish.
>
> (*S.P.* p. 31).

and

> Now, constricted in an agony of labour
> We retch our hearts out, teasing the sublime
> To intricate motives, adequate to the hour,
> And envy no man's pedestal of rhyme.

This failure is perhaps responsible for the predominance of conceits in these poems. Very often one gets the impression that once the original image flashed on him, Mr. Bottrall merely worked out the associated images regardless of their relevance. Consider, for instance,

> Thinking of this which will not, this which might not
> Be, or could not, the heart
> Fuses like salt under a blowpipe, grows liquid
> And then hardens into a bead of fear.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Nor do the following strike me as serious responses:

> Our world is a mutilated lion
> Looking for a hole to settle in and die;

and

> Like a child towards its nurse
> Time goes stumbling with little steps . . .

There is a surprisingly sagging element in these poems, but where all is taut, as in *Revengers Against Time* the total effect is circumscribed by the unalleviated circumlocution. One feels that Mr. Bottrall could if challenged supply an equally adequate set of alternative images at any point in these poems. (It is perhaps one sign of the genuineness of *On a Grave of the Drowned* that we feel it could not be altered in this way).

The following lines, which appeared in *Scrutiny* for Summer, 1942, raise a pretty problem:

> Heart, look at those ripples of violet light
> Greening the ice-filmed lake
> And diligent tracery of birch.
> This is winter now, the soul's frozen night,
> But the stored element of fire
> Insidiously undermining will delightedly break
> The hemming surface. See, the blocks urge
> Their melting way to the long strait,
> Clashing and crushing fear
> And the hesitation that trembled on this verge.
>
> On my own granite cliffs
> When the slow strokes of morning
> Topped the breakers, blanching the lichen-grey coast,
> How often have I seen gulls drift,
> Teeter, spin and in great circles breast
> The eddying air, feathers ruffling
> In the joy of, the mastery of the blast.
> These airy lovers, billowing by whatever time
> Or seascape, coupled in storm and stress,
> No jealous worm tries or destroys, and centuries
> Will witness their freedom and expressive prime.

If these lines were composed before Mr. Bottrall had read *Little Gidding*, he should in self-defence have mentioned the fact. If not, it would be interesting to know *how long* he had known *Little Gidding* when he wrote them. In any case, the echoes of Hopkins and Yeats come very near to parody and suggest an alarming degree of uncertainty in the poet's impulse. It makes one wonder whether Mr. Bottrall feels that he can go further in his own manner without repeated 'shots' from his contemporaries.

These notes have been written with an eye on such phrases as 'Poets of decided gift . . . who may be read seriously as

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

attempting to express sensibilities of our time in verse'. If the sensibility does not seem impressive measured by the highest standards, a glance at the host of present-day verse-writers is sufficient to confirm the view that Mr. Bottrall still stands well to the forefront among his contemporaries. His position is very much that of a distinguished soloist who plays his own cadenza in a concerto written by Eliot, Pound, Yeats and Hopkins. (Of course, detailed analysis, which I have shirked, would be required to substantiate this view of a technique which is at once borrowed and original, where local success is no guarantee of total success). The playing of cadenzas is a proper work: Mr. Bottrall's enterprise in attempting to develop from the best contemporary models was admirable. Yet here again closer attention to the text would serve to document the impression that Mr. Bottrall is not developing further, that on the contrary . . . Mr. Leavis introduced the author of *The Loosening* as a 'young poet whose achieved work leaves no room for doubt about his future' One may pardonably wonder whether what now lies before us was the future Mr. Leavis anticipated in 1932.

To feel doubtful about the permanent worth of this body of verse somehow only heightens its contemporary interest. Mr. Bottrall seems more aware than any other writer of his generation of the possibilities of good verse writing. *Uneasy Verdict*, for example, which is not very striking as an attitude, is an extremely interesting commentary on Yeats's middle-period mannerisms. And when we come to the last poem of the selection, *Sestina: Ritornello*, it is hard to repress the speculation whether it was not sired by Mr. Empson who drew attention to 'those lovely sestines of Sidney' in *Seven Types*, or by Mr. Auden, who attempted the form in *Look, Stranger*!

As far as I could judge, the selection of poems seems to have been made with discernment, with the possible exception of *Rondeau* (*To Edith Sitwell*), but as Miss Sitwell in the preface expresses her pride in the dedication and describes the rondeau as 'a poem of a perfect beauty, in which every vein is filled with light and fire', *tout le monde a dû y trouver son compte*.

H. A. MASON.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

HENRY JAMES: THE STORIES

FOURTEEN STORIES BY HENRY JAMES, selected by David Garnett (Rupert Hart-Davis, 15/-).

Henry James's short stories and *nouvelles* are out of print so any publisher willing to devote some of his meagre allotment of paper to giving us any of that unique body of literary treasures deserves our gratitude at once. But whether Mr. David Garnett, who selects the volume just published, is equally praiseworthy, is another matter. We all have our personal favourites among the stories and no anthologist could satisfy everyone, of course, but it seems to me that the questions to raise in inspecting such a selection are—Will it help the reader new to this author to enjoy him and so want to explore the *œuvre* for himself? or the uninitiated who is at sea among the novels—will it help him to find his bearings and get some insight into the nature and aims of this difficult art? I am afraid Mr. Garnett's choice, backed by Mr. Garnett's Introduction, will be more likely to put the novice off and certainly won't offer any critical hints to those who feel lost in a fog. In fact, you can see this is so from the press it has had, the lip-service paid to the genius of Henry James rarely being backed by first-hand judgment and genuine appreciation, even among our higher reviewers.

Mr. Garnett has based his anthology on the appeal of quantity instead of quality, restricting himself to the shortest stories in order to get so many in. This seems to me a mistake: instead of fourteen stories, half of which are not worth owning (some worth reading once, some not) surely eight or nine first-class specimens of greater length would have been preferable. It seems hard on an author to have some of his worst pieces thrust in the public eye simply because they are short. For Henry James undeniably wrote some poor, some silly and some downright bad stories, and Mr. Garnett has dug them up (though there are some very good very short ones, such as *Greville Fane*, which he has apparently overlooked). Thus of those he reprints, *Paste* is an adaptation of one of Maupassant's slickest stories, and is hardly less shallow than its model; *Sir Edmund Orme* is a feeble, uncharacteristic effort—written for The Yellow Book and not even up to inclusion there; *The Private Life* is an earlier exercise, I should say, for *The Sacred Fount* and is silly in the same way; *The Tree of Knowledge* is a bore; *Maud-Evelyn* seems to me unprofitably unpleasant in the same way as *The Altar of the Dead* and some of the other stories written at that period—morbid is the nearest word to describe them; *The Diary of a Man of Fifty* and *The Marriages* are fair specimens of a class in which his work offers many more interesting examples; *Owen Wingrave* is a respectable piece that fails to rise to its possibilities. *Brooksmith* is a whimsical expression of James's social ideal, and nothing more. *The Pupil* was worth reprinting

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

if only to show that James can offer as lively and amusing a surface as any writer in the language: it is the only specimen in the anthology that introduces the author of *The Portrait of a Lady* and *The Bostonians*, the brilliantly witty novelist whose range and scope is so much wider than the conventional account of him, with its emphasis on *The Sacred Fount, The Ambassadors* and so on, admits. Only *The Real Thing, The Abasement of the Northmores* and *The Jolly Corner* are selections from the best level of his work, and that reach down to its core. And dispersed as they are, what effect can they have on the reader who does not already know how to relate them to the body of James's significant writings?

In the Introduction we can put our finger on the mistaken assumptions that have directed Mr. Garnett's choice. What are we to make of this final exhortation to the reader?:

> 'Henry James had no unusual understanding of psychology, no abnormal faculty of analysing the human soul. His characters are just as much alive as the people we meet in hotels or at the houses of our friends, but no more. They are not heroic or larger than life; characters whom to meet once is to know intimately for ever like . . . James's characters are ordinary people seen as indistinctly as we see people in real life; but the attitudes in which we meet them are revealed in all their complexities, with all the possible implications, so that we can grasp the situation as we seldom can in life'.

Is this an attempt to make James acceptable to the great Boots public by assuring them that he 'creates' 'people in real life' just like Trollope and Priestley? Surely Mr. Garnett must know it his duty to warn the innocent reader off any attempt to take James as a naturalistic novelist. The briefest account of him should include mention of his descent from Hawthorne, that he is a novelist in the same tradition as Melville; should allude to his deliberate stylization of life; notice the techniques he devised for conveying his special interests, his recurrent symbols, his pre-occupation with the ideal of social life and the function of the artist in it. How anyone professing to write about James could pen the first sentence of the paragraph I have quoted is beyond belief. The son and brother of psychologist-philosophers, James was of a highly introspective habit himself—nothing is plainer—and he had the intuitive understanding of psychology that we find in all great literary artists. Such painful triumphs in morbid psychology as the short story *Europe*, the well-known *Turn of the Screw*, and the study of the relation of the heroines of *The Bostonians*, leap to the mind, but the real refutation of Mr. Garnett's unpardonable obtuseness is in the very texture of Henry James's best work. And what are the 'ghost' stories but expressions of his psychological bent? the 'ghost' being a convenient symbol for the oppressive atmosphere of moral pressure, such as the family ghost that kills the hero of *Owen Wingrave*, or for the guilty conscience, as in *Sir Eustace Orme* (both reprinted here) or for some morbid state. In Mr. Garnett's

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

last choice, *The Jolly Corner*, the 'ghost' symbol is explicitly used to embody 'the other self' of the hero, and so might have served to introduce the reader to one of this novelist's principal artistic devices.

The value of *The Jolly Corner* would have been multiplied if beside it an anthologist had placed, say, *The Lesson of the Master*, (a mere twenty-five thousand words for which we would gladly have forgone *Paste* and suchlike). These stories are both attempts by James to justify to himself the line he took. The horror the expatriate sees in his New York mansion is the self that James felt he would have become if, instead of settling to live the life of a writer in Europe, he had taken his place as an American in the contemporary world of business and politics. James had no doubt that *that* would have been disastrous; but there was another alternative. The Master, Henry St. George, so like the actual Henry James in name, talents and appearance ('beautifully correct in his tall black hat and his superior frock coat') is unlike him in two ways—he has made a financial success of novel-writing by deliberately writing below his own best level, and he has lived the normal life. ' "I've had everything. In other words, I've missed everything", says the Master to his disciple, who replies:

> ' "You've had the full rich masculine human general life, with all the responsibilities and duties and burdens and sorrows and joys—all the domestic and social initiations and complications. They must be immensely suggestive, immensely amusing", Paul anxiously submitted.
>
> "Amusing?"
>
> "For a strong man—yes".
>
> "They've given me subjects without number, if that's what you mean; but they've taken away at the same time the power to use them. I've touched a thousand things, but which one of them have I turned into gold? The artist has to do only with that—he knows nothing of any baser metal. I've led the life of the world, with my wife and my progeny; the clumsy conventional expensive materialized vulgarized brutalized life of London. We've got everything handsome, even a carriage—we're perfect Philistines and prosperous hospitable eminent people. But, my dear fellow, don't try to stultify yourself and pretend you don't know what we *haven't* got. It's bigger than all the rest. Between artists—come!" the Master wound up. "You know as well as you sit there that you'd put a pistol-ball into your brain if you had written my books!" '

This is the more interesting possibility than that treated in *The Jolly Corner*, and it produced a much finer and more complex story. The counterpoise to the mature and successful Henry St. George is the young novelist Paul Overt (the author of *Roderick Hudson*, as it were); at the Master's urging he makes the sacrifice of the human goods. Both the Master and Overt are Henry James potentials, played off against each other. This story is not like

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Jolly Corner, a simple statement whose artistic effect depends entirely on playing on the reader's nerves; this is a drama, the tension arising from the uncertainty the reader is kept in and finally left in. The series of surprises in the structure are not the surprise of the trick plot of the well-made story of the Maupassant—Kipling—W. W. Jacobs type. The ambivalence, which is personal and inside James himself, conditions the structure: the uncertainty Henry James felt remains to the end and is expressed in the final ambiguity—what indeed was the lesson of the Master? It is one of the most remarkable of works of art.

Moreover, it exhibits one of James's favourite techniques, the structure built on alternative selves. It is a device for conducting psychological exploration in dramatic form. Even *The Diary of a Man of Fifty*, Mr. Garnett's first choice, which he says has a charming flavour of Turgenev, is stamped as unmistakably James's, slight as it is, in the mathematical elegance with which its case is presented. The elderly soldier who is the diarist and had blighted his life by leaving the Italian Countess, sees acted out by their younger selves, presented in the same relation—in the forms of the dead woman's daughter and a young Englishman—the opposite solution to the diarist's. I dwell on this technical device because it is a key one—it is a different thing from his use of the portrait as the idealized or dead or false self, which occurs in a great many novels and stories, starting with the very early *nouvelle Watch and Ward*. It is not merely a device or literary formula, or, like the portrait, the symbol of an intellectual idea, but a method of artistic procedure. It enables an exploration of certain possibilities of life to be presented dramatically, with the tensions, the contrasts and the psychological surprises that make a work of art instead of a narrative. It is obvious that such a method implies a very considerable degree of stylization of the raw material of life, a very special approach to characterization. Henry James takes the trouble to make this clear in many different ways, most of all in his use of symbolic names (as Overt above; and the Death of the Lion takes place in the country-house named Prestidge)—the only one most readers seem to notice is that of the Princess Casamassima—and symbolic figures, such as the Figure in the Carpet, the Beast in the Jungle, the Golden Bowl. How unkind, then, of Mr. Garnett to go out of his way to inform his readers that Henry James is not a different kind of novelist from the circulating-library average. Can he have inspired the blurb which describes this selection as 'the best introduction to the work of "the old magician" for those who have not yet fallen victims to the enchantment'? Enchantment is the character of the appeal made by, say, Mr. De La Mare's writings, but it seems to me a great injustice to Henry James to suggest that that is the nature of the interest his work has for us. His stature is that of Tolstoy, Conrad, the great international masters of the novel, and it is misleading to imply that he offers us, even in his short stories, anything less serious than a profound apprehension of life.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Of course if you take random dips into the shortest stories, as in this volume, you risk overlooking everything vital. Mr. Garnett has put none of the keys into his readers' hands. Who would suppose from *The Abasement of the Northmores* that Henry James had written a whole body of stories about the life of the writer and the novelist—the artist, as he more generally considers him—and that these contain some of his liveliest, wittiest and most deeply felt writing, besides embodying some of his fundamental ideas? *The Author of 'Beltraffio'*, *The Figure in the Carpet*, *The Lesson of the Master*, even *The Coxon Fund*, *John Delavoy*, *The Middle Years*, *The Next Time*, *The Death of the Master*, are all more central than the one of the series reprinted; an introducer should at least have referred his readers to them. *The Real Thing* is fortunately here: it was an anecdote of Du Maurier's that provided James with a congenial theme—he made it a fable expressing his contempt as an artist for the English country-house culture and its social values. Characteristically, it is much deeper than it looks and will bear endless pondering. It links up with the novel *The Tragic Muse*, where he develops his theory of the function of artist and actress and their pre-eminence in a world of politics and society.

The account Mr. Garnett gives of James's development is also misleading. 'He began as a painstaking writer for American magazines and most of his early stories are singularly feeble. He did not, at first, know how to write and he contrived stories with little imagination or knowledge of human beings. He developed slowly. He was thirty-six years old before he published the first story included here . . . ' The author of *No Love* and *The Sailor's Return* has, naturally, a high standard. Still, I feel that the greenhorn should be told that before the date of the first story Mr. Garnett thinks printable, James had published *Roderick Hudson* (1874), an accomplished and adult novel on a theme full of interest; *The American* (1875), also a novel showing considerable powers; and had got well on with *The Portrait of a Lady*, one of the finest novels in the language; that he had written many short stories of permanent literary value, of the highest interest in themselves and also of great importance to the understanding of his work—such as *Madame de Mauves*, *Daisy Miller*, *An International Episode*; and that, above all, he had written the remarkable *nouvelle The Europeans*, whose perfection, seriousness and originality as a work of art is surpassed by nothing he composed later. Continuing with a sneer at James's debt to Hawthorne Mr. Garnett ends: 'It was from that sort of nonsense that he escaped the following year when he came to live in Europe. A year in Paris, meeting Flaubert, Turgenev, Maupassant and Zola altered him'. Yet his correspondence shows that he was disappointed with these men of letters and disgusted with their *milieu*, that he thought their novels inferior to George Eliot's and soon decided to abandon France in favour of a permanent home in England. What he learnt from the French seems to have been mostly what to avoid, and what more valuable it was that George Eliot, for instance, could do. He was more in Dickens's debt than Turgenev's or Zola's, still more

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

than anything else was he rooted in his native tradition (his volume on Hawthorne in the English Men of Letters Series shows how seriously he took his fore-runner), a tradition which included Bunyan.

No, I can't agree with Mr. Garnett that his volume is 'the best introduction to reading James at all'. There was a more modest and much better one, published by Nelson in the fabulous days of the sixpennies and sevenpennies and which, in its indestructible blue binding and excellent print, could until recently still be found on second-hand stalls. It contained *Daisy Miller, An International Episode* and *Four Meetings*, stories stimulating, amusing and exquisite in themselves, which make sense together, and illustrate in the most apprehensible way James's principal subject, the International Theme. No one who picked up that volume could suppose James a discouraging author or form any false views about the nature of his art. And that reader would be launched painlessly on the right path—qualified to appreciate *The Portrait of a Lady* and to graduate to *The Golden Bowl*, to recognize the interest of such relevant works as *Pandora, Lady Barbarina* and *The Reverberator*. I remember Nelson's cheap reprint with gratitude, for it lay around the house when I was a child and was my own introduction to Henry James.

Finally, I should like to register a protest against a gratuitous and worse than unjustifiable display of animus. Out of a four-page introduction Mr. Garnett devotes two paragraphs to insulting American critics of Henry James in general. He says: 'If American critics admire James they do so with a bad grace; they admire in spite of the fact that he learned to write in Europe, that he preferred to live in England, that he was "snobbish" and wrote, sometimes, about our upper classes, that he did not seize every opportunity to criticize the world . . . The theme of every American critic (even of Mr. Van Wyck Brooks) is that Henry James abandoned his birthright and never became at home in England' etc. I suppose I have read as much writing on Henry James in books and periodicals as Mr. Garnett, since it is a subject I take a particular interest in, and I can find no justice in his attack. Surely it was *only* Mr. Van Wyck Brooks, among critics of any standing at all, who ever abused James as an expatriate, and the essentially international character of James's genius has long been a commonplace of American literary criticism. As for the other charges, I don't recollect any but extreme Left-wing writers taking that line, and if it comes to that we have equally to blush for Communist 'literary' criticism of the same stamp. No country is responsible for ideologically prompted critics. *Pace* Mr. Garnett I should venture that except what has appeared in the pages of *Scrutiny all* the intelligent criticism of Henry James and all the hard work on him has been done in the land of his origin. Yvor Winters (in *Maule's Curse*), Edmund Wilson, Quentin Anderson, F. O. Matthiessen, among many others, have left us in no doubt of the high and able evaluation of James's art current

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in the United States. When *The Hound and Horn*, the former highbrow review of Harvard, produced a number in honour of James, though it is true some of it was not very inspired criticism, yet I distinctly remember that the only really offensive contribution was by our Mr. Stephen Spender. And Mr. Garnett does not exactly deserve a bouquet from James's admirers for his present effort.

Q. D. LEAVIS.

THE APPRECIATION OF HENRY JAMES

HENRY JAMES: THE MAJOR PHASE, by F. O. Matthiessen (Oxford University Press, 9/6).

I start with the last section of *Henry James: The Major Phase* by way of assuring genuine admirers of James that Mr. Matthiessen's book shouldn't go unhandled. The section is called 'The Painter's Sponge and Varnish Bottle', and it is devoted to illustrating in some detail how James improved *The Portrait of a Lady* in revising it. For in revising he does, for the most part, improve, much as one might have expected the contrary of any systematic meddling by the late James with the work of his early prime. We are not encouraged when the critic tells us that the 'writer's equivalent for the single flake of pigment is the single word', but the actual instances of revision given us are extremely interesting. We see James working happily for a vivider concreteness, a higher specificity, greater colloquial freedom and livlier point. Instead of 'their multifarious colloquies' he writes 'their plunge . . . into the deeps of talk'. Osmond in the first version 'hesitated a moment'; in the revised he 'just hung fire'. The Countess Germini, who originally 'cried . . . with a laugh', in the revision 'piped', which defines her idiosyncrasy more sharply, and, as Mr. Matthiessen well puts it, condenses her sound and manner into one word. And here is another good instance: 'Originally Ralph had concluded, "Henrietta, however, is fragrant—Henrietta is decidedly fragrant!" This became a punch line: "Henrietta does smell of the future—it almost knocks one down!" ' This leads us to a very significant kind of change in which the radical preoccupations implicit in James's sensibility assert themselves and his positives take on explicitness:

> Ralph's "delights of observation" become "joys of contemplation". Warburton's sisters' "want of vivacity' is sharpened to "want of play of mind', just as Isabel's "fine freedom of composition" becomes "free play of intelligence" . . . It is equally characteristic that Isabel's "feelings" become her "consciousness", and that her "absorbing happiness" in her first impressions of England becomes "her fine, full consciousness". She no longer feels that she is "being entertained" by Osmond's conversation; rather she has "what always gave her a very private thrill, the consciousness of a new relation" '.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This section of Mr. Matthiessen's book, however, is offered only as a loosely attached appendix; it doesn't really belong. For *The Portrait of a Lady* doesn't belong to what he assumes to be James's 'Major Phase'. I say 'assumes', because I can't see that he does anything more critical than take over the conventional view that the great James is the late James—the James of *The Ambassadors, The Wings of the Dove,* and *The Golden Bowl* ('his three major novels'). In the conventional way he reinforces his reliance on the unanimity of fashion with an appeal to James himself:

> 'I agree with James' own estimate that *The Portrait of a Lady* was his first masterpiece, but that thirty years later he began to do work of a greater depth and richness than any he had approached before. My understanding of his development has been increased by the rare opportunity of reading through the hundred and fifty thousand words of his unpublished working note-books, which, extending from 1878 to 1914, concentrate most heavily on his aims and ambitions during the crucial period of the eighteen-nineties'.

This last sentence gives us Mr. Matthiessen's offer. He does with the note-books, however, nothing to give his offer substance; nothing that can be said to forward understanding of James's development or to justify the claim made for them. In fact, his use of them amounts to little more than a show, under cover of with some relaxed ruminations about the late novels have the air of being a serious contribution to criticism. Even if the note-books had contained more illumination than any we can divine from Mr. Matthiessen's exemplifying, he would, to have brought them into enlightening relation to James's art, have had to be the active critic he doesn't show himself to be.

He relies, I have said, so much on convention as to feel absolved from attempting to base his assumed valuations in criticism: the 'Major Phase' of his title remains an unargued postulate. The inertness of this reliance is made the more oddly apparent by his showing that he knows of strictures that have been passed on the works of the late period. I think this will be judged a fair way of putting it, since, though he formulates them as coming from himself, they make no difference to his attitude. He doesn't appear to realize their force as criticism, but rests quite unembarrassed on his *donnée*: the Major Phase is the Major Phase. When I myself in these pages criticized *The Golden Bowl* in terms that Mr. Matthiessen may be said to summarize my conclusion was that *The Golden Bowl* is not a great novel, and that still seems to me the inevitable conclusion.

So with *The Ambassadors*: Mr. Matthiessen concedes enough to dispose of that book as either a major creation or a successful work of art when (p. 37) he corroborates my own judgment that James utterly fails to justify the essential imputations of value that are involved in the offered theme of Strether's awakening to

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Life. True, we are given arguments for nevertheless persisting in a high estimate of the book.

> 'What gives this novel the stamina to survive the dated flavour of Strether's liberation is the quality that James admired most in Turgenieff, the ability to endow some of his characters with such vitality that they seem to take the plot into their own hands, or rather, to continue to live beyond its exigencies. The centre of that vitality here is the character not reckoned with in James's initial outline. For what pervades the final passages is Strether's unacknowledged love for Madame de Vionnet. James has succeeded in making her so attractive that, quite apart from the rigid requirement of his structure, there can really be no question of Strether's caring deeply for any other woman. The means that James used to evoke her whole way of life is a supreme instance of how he went about to give concrete embodiment to his values'

The argument—one associates it with a familiar notion of criticizing fiction—itself is of a kind to promote mistrust; and it seems to me that the facts of the given case make it glaringly absurd here. If Madame de Vionnet is the centre of vitality, that doesn't say much for the book; for in my judgment she illustrates notably the characteristic weaknesses of the late James. The fussy subtleties and indirections of her presentment signal a lack of grasp, and a preoccupation with justifying an imputed value that, to a live sense of reality (such, indeed, as James's late manner can hardly be said to challenge with any insistence), appears ridiculous and sentimental. That a Strether's valuation of a Madame de Vionnet should be of the order that Mr. Matthiessen defines for himself—one wouldn't mind that if only one hadn't to identify Strether as valuer with James, who asks us to see him and his predicament as invested with the dignity and weight of tragic irony. For the lady to be accepted by us as so miraculously transcending the familiar type and ethos, James would have had to do something more creative and convincing than the transmutation by atmospheric vagueness and Impressionist æstheticizing that he attempts.

Such indeed is the ineffectiveness of his art and his general feebleness in *The Ambassadors* as to suggest senility—though one knows that the actual case is more interesting than that. (The peculiar thinness of the book is obviously related to the fact that he had, appropriately, intended to do the theme in a *nouvelle*; but, of course, we still have to ask why, in his late period, the substance of *nouvelles* should tend to be spun out by overtreatment into full-length Jamesian novels). Mr. Matthiessen singles out for praise the expeditionary force from Massachusetts:

> 'The portrait of the Pococks—Sarah, Jim and Mamie—is one of James's triumphs in light-handed satire, in the manner he had mastered in *Daisy Miller* and had developed further, in that lesser-known but delightful jeu-d'esprit, *The Reverberator*'.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

—When I myself cast back in the comparative way I can only wonder at the abject feebleness that, in the treatment of one of his most congenial themes, can overtake the hand of a master. It is one judgment, of course, against another; but, reverting to the crucial matter of Madame de Vionnet, I suggest that the presumption lies against the appraisal that, exalting a figure as tragically impressive, elaborates itself in this mode:

> 'His [James's] one living tap-root to the past was through his appreciation of such an exquisite product of tradition as Madame de Vionnet. Yet, as he created her, she was the very essence of the æsthetic sensibility of his own day. Strether can hardly find enough comparison for her splendour. Her head is like that on "an old precious medal of the Renaissance". She is a "goddess still partly engaged in a morning cloud", or "a sea-nymph waist-high in the summer surge". She is so "various and multifold" that he hardly needs to mention Cleopatra. And though Mona Lisa is not mentioned, James is evoking something like Pater's spell', etc.

In the remaining novel of the 'major' trio Mr. Matthiessen judges James to have done even better:

> Why it was that James could create women of much greater emotional substance than his men we can tell best by turning to *The Wings of the Dove*'.

I agree that there is more strength in *The Wings of the Dove* than in the other two. It is to be found, I think, in the presentment of that squalid background to Kate Croy's life which represents the pressure driving her into unscrupulousness and entitling her to some of our sympathy, and in the presentment of Mrs. Lowder (Aunt Maud), magnificent personification of Edwardian or late-Victorian vulgarity. But the book depends for success even more on the heroine, Milly Theale, than *The Ambassadors* does on Madame de Vionnet. And 'substance', it seems to me, is the last word to apply to Milly Theale. To my sense, she simply isn't there: the effect on me is one of being directed, with endless iteration and insistence, to feel emotional intensities about a blank; it is an effect of elaborated, boring and embarrassing sentimentality. Mr. Matthiessen, on the other hand, judges that James created in Milly Theale 'the most resonant symbol for what he had to say about humanity'. Again it is one judgment against another. And again, as presumptive evidence in favour of mine, I cite Mr. Matthiessen's own appreciative commentary.

He says (p. 59) that 'despite James's past-masterly command over the details of realistic presentation, he is evoking essentially the mood of a fairy-tale'—which is an odd way (I quote from Mr. Matthiessen's next sentence) of raising 'his international theme to its ultimate potentiality'. He describes as a 'spell' the method by which James tries to invest Milly with significance: 'James has

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

completed his spell and transformed his heroine into a Renaissance princess'. In so far as it works, 'spell' is certainly the appropriate word for it; for what positive qualities does James even attribute to this supremely symbolic paragon? She is fabulously wealthy, that is all—unless one adds that she is American. She isn't shown to us as especially intelligent, as representing any tradition, or as herself interesting. Simply, she is (we are to understand) a fabulously wealthy American heiress, and as such has a right to expect enormously and vaguely of life, to receive homage as a Princess, and, because she is a Princess (American) to be pitied as a supremely tragic figure when her expectations are brought up against the prospect of death. There is more to be said for Isabel Archer as a tragic heroine; she is 'there', invested with convincing positive qualities, though James overvalues her. But the only ground offered for seeing a more significant and interesting pathos in Milly's case than in that of any one else who expects enormously and vaguely of life is that she is an *American* heiress; the suggestion of significance and spiritual intensity is wholly a matter of the 'spell'. If this worked for anyone it would be a success of illusion, depending on a fairy-tale abeyance of the adult mind—a triumph of mere suggestion.

The reminder of James's devoted memories of Minnie Temple, the admired and idealized cousin who died young, has no critical bearing. It may help to explain why James should have been able to suppose that in sentimentalizing round a void he was defining a presence; but it doesn't make any difference to what we actually have. The weaknesses of that, as of the 'major' works in general, are obviously correlated with an over-developed technical preoccupation; James, working at the problems he poses himself, fails to realize his themes sufficiently as life, with the result that he makes demands on us, for sympathy and evaluative response, that we can't satisfy. Mr. Quentin Anderson's recent essay in *The Kenyon Review* (Autumn, 1947), in which he argues with a great deal of force that James gives proof in his work of taking very seriously his father's system, leads one to suppose that a preoccupation with symbolism may also have a good deal to do with the way in which, in framing his problems for himself, and handling his themes, he offends our sense of life and reality. But no amount of explaining how James came to do what he did makes what he did other than what we find it to be.

I hope I haven't appeared to suggest that I lump the three novels together as equal in unsuccess. It goes with what I call the conventionality of Mr. Matthiessen's approach that he does lump them together, failing to make the marked discrimination called for. *The Ambassadors* I judge to be an utter failure; it hasn't a theme capable of sustaining treatment at novel-length. In *The Wings of the Dove* the failure is at the centre of the conception, entailing what seem interminable dreary wastes; but the strong part is substantial and very impressive. It is good James that one remembers vividly and goes back to. *The Golden Bowl* has a

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

magnificent theme, and the genius of the author is magnificently apparent in the handling. It is in the central valuations that the book goes wrong.

It is my sense of James's greatness that makes me insist on my difference with Mr. Matthiessen about the novels of what he calls the 'Major Phase'. For his view is representative; at any rate, I hope it isn't offensive to say that accords with a convention that has prevailed since about the time when Percy Lubbock's *The Craft of Fiction* was first acclaimed, if not longer. And until that convention is put out of countenance there can be no hope of getting for James's genius and achievement the recognition due to them. Let it be understood that, by the consensus of the best people, it is the late James that must be admired, and the late James will (with, say, Percy Lubbock's help) by many be admired —though it won't be James's genius they are admiring, nor will they be enlightened or exhilarated. Others will know they are bored, and some will conclude critically. The effect in any case is not to encourage the exploration of James, the vastness of whose *œuvre* must strike the conventionally initiated as peculiarly forbidding.

There is a betraying and unfortunate conventionality about the things, other than Mr. Matthiessen's 'major' three, that the *conoscenti* star. Why, for instance, should *The Aspern Papers* and *The Turn of the Screw* get such disproportionate attention? They aren't, after all, the superlative products of the master's genius that the distinction accorded them suggests; many finer stories are left for the explorer to find for himself. And there are the really bad things that, having once been tipped, go on being. There is, for instance, *The Altar of the Dead*. The favour it enjoys goes back at least to the fervent pæan of acclaim that will be found in Miss Rebecca West's little book. And now we find Mr. Matthiessen (p. 9) including it, in a routine way, among the recognized masterpieces. Yet it is a piece of sentimentality so maudlin and rank that an admirer of James, one would have thought, would rather not be reminded of its existence. (Mr. Matthiessen commends in the same sentence *Owen Wingrave*; yet if—being challenged—he looks at it again, can he deny that it is one of James's feebler things?)

On the other hand he can commit the injustice of this bracket: 'the strained virtuosity of *The Awkward Age* and *The Sacred Fount* . . . ' 'Strained virtuosity' is a kind phrase for *The Sacred Fount*, in which James doesn't even seem to know what he is trying to do, and the inexplicitnesses and ambiguities proliferate in a way that suggests a disease rather than a meaning. But, though one may concede that in *The Awkward Age* there is an excess of *doing*, nevertheless this is an almost incredibly brilliant work, about the intention and significance of which surely no genuine admirer of James can be in doubt (though, indeed, Lubbock in *The Craft of Fiction* describes it as a comedy). To be capable of backing the late period as 'major' and dismissing *The Awkward Age*—it

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

certainly strikes me as odd. That is the work I should pick on as exemplifying, along with *What Maisie Knew*, a distinctively 'late' James who triumphantly justified himself.

I have an impression that the critical writing of American academic intellectuals is on the whole decidedly more respectable than the corresponding English work, and I am disappointed not to be able to hail the book under review as a striking corroborative instance. Yet, at the cost of stressing the pejorative suggestion of 'academic', one can perhaps still find in the book a representative superiority. This is a point that one can't make at all forcefully without specifying an English case one has in mind. But everyone on this side of the Atlantic knows the type and could produce an example. There is that large display of familiarity with the latest thing in critical apparatus and idiom and fashion, and in the world of Culture generally; there is the absence in the book of any justifying purpose beyond the purpose of writing a book—of an impressively intellectual kind; and there are those disastrous give-aways, when, from time to time, the writer ventures too much on his own, or, in using his acquisitions, betrays patently that he is handling them from the outside, with no real understanding.

The book under review must be granted a marked superiority to the English product I have in mind. Yet in the opening paragraph of the Preface this meets us:

> 'The creative writers of my generation have recognized and assimilated his values. Auden and Spender, no matter how widely they have diverged from Eliot in politics and religion, have continued to agree with him that James is one of the few great masters of our modern literature. Practitioners of the novel who have taken its art seriously have long since responded to the high claims which Percy Lubbock made for James's technique in *The Craft of Fiction*. (1921)'.

This, at the outset, with its confident offer of values so betrayingly assorted, suggests fairly the relation between pretension and intellectual quality that characterizes the book. Eliot, Auden and Spender—one can only suppose Day Lewis left out (after all, he has given the Clark Lectures) because he hasn't pronounced on James. And can anything better than academic commentary come from a writer on James who thinks that *The Craft of Fiction* offers anything better than an academic substitute for criticism, or that any novelist taking his art seriously (unless an Academy novelist) has ever supposed his practice to have been affected by the book? But Mr. Matthiessen is right: *The Craft of Fiction* does enjoy a high reputation—which is a reason for being emphatic about the challenge.

The passage quoted above is representative. This, for instance, is how we are shown that the contemporaneity of James can be made out to be practically unlimited, so that Anglo-Catholics and Communists alike can rope him in:

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> 'His intense spiritual awareness, drifting into a world without moorings, has told others beside Eliot that if religion is to persist, it must be based again in coherent dogma. At the opposite pole, our novelists of social protest can still learn much, as Robert Cantwell has incisively argued, from James's scale of values. His gradation of characters according to their degree of consciousness may be validly translated into terms of social consciousness, and thus serve as a measure in a more dynamic world than James ever conceived of'. (p. 151).

Yet there is, after all, a respect in which James is not altogether contemporary. In his novels

> 'there is none of the darkly sub-conscious life that has characterized the novel since Freud. James's novels are strictly novels of intelligence rather than of full consciousness . . . ' (p. 23).

—To attempt to define the distinctive selections and emphases that mark James's treatment of experience—that might be a valuable undertaking. But Mr. Matthiessen goes no further. He merely hands us the phrase, 'strictly novels of intelligence', as self-explanatory. In what sense are George Eliot's novels any less strictly 'novels of intelligence?' She, suffering too from the disadvantage of not having read Freud, is even less endowed (we gather) than James with the psychological resources that have enriched 'the novel since Freud':

> 'James occupies a curious border-line between the older psychologists like Hawthorne or George Eliot, whose concerns were primarily religious and ethical, and the post-Freudians'. (p. 93).

It would be as much to the point to tell us of Tolstoy by way of establishing his pre-Freudian limitations that his 'concerns were primarily religious and ethical'. George Eliot, even though a lesser genius, is Tolstoyan both in her insight into the obscurer workings of the psyche, and in the art that renders the insight. But the academic commonplaces about her (they are to be found in Lord David Cecil's *Early Victorian Novelists*) perpetuate a blindness to the nature of her greatness, so that it is possible to adduce her (alternatively to the very different Hawthorne—who himself hardly fits Mr. Matthiessen's intention) as representative of 'the older psychologists' who were ignorant of the darkly subconscious life'. (Mr. Matthiessen is welcome to his immediate point, that she doesn't deal with Lesbianism, as James, in *The Bostonians*, does—'without having to give it a name').

George Eliot was a peculiarly unlucky shot; but a critic, in any case, oughtn't to have been making such generalizations—and certainly oughtn't to have been giving Freud the place in literary history that Mr. Matthiessen gives him. The unconscious and the subconscious didn't wait for Freud to let them into literature, and there are other novelists besides Tolstoy and George Eliot from

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

whom this truth can be enforced. And Shakespeare—but Shakespeare, of course, didn't practise the novel.

I will close with a difference about a work of James's I admire very much, *Washington Square*. I should have said that it didn't present the least difficulty to the reader; but if Mr. Matthiessen is right in his account of it, then I in my reading have always been wrong:

> 'That book, despite its slightness, is so accurate in its human values that its omission from James's collected edition is the one most to be regretted. Those values are concentrated in the simple moral goodness of Catherine, in contrast to the cruel egotism of her father and the bare-faced venality of her suitor'. (p. 122).

I should have said that the whole point of the story depended upon the not obscurely presented datum that the father's ironic dryness covered something very different from 'cruel egotism'.

F. R. LEAVIS.

ENGLISH CHAMBER MUSIC, by Ernest Meyer (Lawrence and Wishart, 30/-).

To my mind this is the most important book on music published since Reese's *Music in the Middle Ages and* Lang's *Music of Western Civilization*. In some ways it is, for English readers, even more significant than those two monumental works, for it deals specifically with our own musical tradition, and with an aspect of it that has been shamefully neglected. English musicology has to its discredit more than enough sins of omission, if not of incompetence. A vast amount of early Tudor and pre-Tudor manuscripts still awaits investigation; the great seventeenth-century school of instrumental composers is unpublished and unexplored, except for a few isolated fragments. And now it has taken a scholar of another nationality to write the first comprehensive study of this music.

The account of the idiom of Gibbons, Ferrabosco, Jenkins, William Lawes and the smaller men which Dr. Meyer offers, is a model of what technical analysis ought to be. He is not afraid to write in terms of the technique of music instead of talking around it; and his writing makes one eager to *hear* the works of which he is speaking. The copious musical examples and appendices contain music of a quality which amply bears out Dr. Meyer's high claims; one hopes that this book will encourage performance of the music (particularly the two big, exciting fantasias of Lawes); and that publication and recording of a selection of the works may follow.

Although Dr. Meyer writes about music in its own terms he never does merely that; he is interested in the technique as the medium in which human experience finds expression. Thus he has to consider too the social conditions that led to a given range

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of 'emotional experiences'; because the ways people feel and think cannot but be moulded by the circumstances in which they live. Dr. Meyer's book is thus not only an account of the rise and fall of the English instrumental tradition; it is also an attempt to answer the question *why* it fell. The musical and historical parts of his book are complementary.

Historically, Dr. Meyer's approach is Marxist, but never unintelligently so. I think he sometimes uses words like 'progressive' in a manner which gives an opportunity to those who want to interpret them stupidly; but it is clear from his many qualifying clauses that his own interpretation is anything but stupid. This is not only a book for which all living and lively English musicians ought to be grateful; it is also one which is of the greatest importance for those who are in any way preoccupied with the problems of the breakdown of the English cultural tradition. One hopes, since the price is no doubt unavoidably so high, that the book will find its way into all libraries.

W.H.M.

SECRET CHROMATIC ART IN THE NETHERLANDS MOTET, by Edward E. Lowinsky (Columbia University Press).

This is a work of abstruse scholarship which can be tackled only by those with considerable musicological equipment. Even a not specifically musical periodical cannot afford, however, to pass it over in silence, for it is a work which is potentially of revolutionary significance. If Mr. Lowinsky's carefully documented theories about secret chromaticism in the Netherlands motet are correct, they may involve a new approach to some sixteenth-century polyphony; they may mean that we have been performing much sixteenth-century choral music in a manner which denudes it of a passion that it ought to have. Whether Lowinsky is right or wrong, his case certainly merits serious investigation.

Moreover, although this is a 'specialized' book, its specialization involves the highest general intelligence. It is by no means merely academic; like Dr. Meyer, Lowinsky always relates his discussion of technicalities to the motives behind them. He asks not only Did composers at this time use this particular technique? but also Why did they use it, what development of the human spirit does it correspond to, what set of circumstances might feasibly have produced it? Thus the technical discussion leads on to a fascinating study of the religious and social background that helped to create this idiom. One can hardly say that this book is 'suitable for the general reader', but there is much more in it than usually meets the professorial eye. It is one of the few technical treatises which is also a help to humane understanding.

W.H.M.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

GRAMOPHONE RECORDS

This is again a good quarter for contemporary English music. Rawsthorne's *Symphonic Studies* is a work whose claims to recording have frequently been urged in these pages; Britten's second quartet is certainly his most considerable instrumental piece.

The Rawsthorne still seems to me a landmark in English symphonic music. While having the same economy and structural tautness that characterizes the Piano Concerto, it is both powerful and noble in conception. Highly dramatic, it is never emotionally indulgent; the scoring is as lucid as the thought. The cleanness, both emotional and technical, of the work is brought out by the precisely vigorous performance by the Philharmonia Orchestra under Constant Lambert, and the recording (H.M.V. under the auspices of the British Council) serves the performance well. It is melancholy, however, to reflect that this work is now nearly ten years old; and that Rawsthorne does not appear to have produced any large-scale work in the subsequent decade.

Britten's second quartet, played by the Zorian Quartet also on H.M.V., is a much more 'serious' piece than his first work for this medium. The somewhat fragmentary rhythm of the opening material suggests the influence of his operatic ventures; and parts of the Chaconne, like the mad scenes in *Peter Grimes*, recall Berg. As a whole, the work is extremely interesting, though I still haven't made up my mind about the (by now celebrated) Chaconne; and it is by this movement that the validity of the work ultimately stands or falls. I don't greatly care for the intermittent solo cadenzas, which seem to me a denial of the essential conception of chaconne form. They are, however, often moving in themselves, and are beautifully played.

Rubbra's second Violin Sonata is also given a most sympathetic performance by Albert Sammons and Gerald Moore, on H.M.V.; and the recording is first-rate. The work is a good one, but it is fifteen years old; and Rubbra is a composer who matured late, who has become a major composer during the last ten years (roughly speaking from the First Symphony, 1937, onwards). So it is, I think, regrettable that the 'gramophone public' should have as an introduction to his work a piece which is not adequately representative of his stature. It is to be hoped that the British Council will follow up these records with a version of the magnificent new 'cello Sonata. This is one of his finest works, and among the handful of really great sonatas of our time. It offers no difficulty of approach, and could be immediately followed by the Third or Fourth Symphony.

British music of an earlier generation is represented by Delius's Violin Concerto, played by Jean Pougnet with the R.P.O. conducted by Beecham, and recorded under the auspices of the Delius Trust. Why Sir Thomas should have chosen to re-record a work which has quite recently been adequately recorded, when there are still so many serious gaps in the Delius gramophone library, is one

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of those little mysteries with which Sir Thomas likes to bewilder a grateful but long-suffering public. Taken on their own merits, however, these new records are very fine. Pougnet's performance perhaps does not get under the skin of the music as convincingly as Sammons's, but it is as exquisite in conception and pure in intonation as is everything this player undertakes. The recording, though not noticeably superior to the earlier Sammons set, is both rich and delicate.

From Columbia comes a recording of Prokoviev's *Alexander Nevsky* Cantata, evolved from his original film music. It is played by the Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Eugene Ormandy, with the Westminster Choir. It is impressive in an old-fashioned way, more barbaric than Rimsky-Korsakov, more academic than Moussorgsky, but quite at home in any concert of nineteenth-century 'national music. I do not agree with those who consider Prokoviev's recent work a complete volte-face on the music he wrote in his Parisian days. His nostalgia for the bad old times was then in danger of toppling over from Stravinsky into Rachmaninov (see the last movement of the Third Piano Concerto). His work to-day has less equivocal relations with the nineteenth century; for that reason it seems the more honest, if the less 'interesting'. The recording and performance seem adequate. The solo lament on the field of battle is the best piece of music, and makes the set well worth having.

The other full-scale recordings are of the stock nineteenth-century symphonic repertory. Before I refer briefly to them, there are a few small recordings which are a little out of the everyday run. Pierre Fournier, the French 'cellist, gives a moving performance of three of the subtlest of Bach's Chorale Preludes, on H.M.V. I don't approve of the transcription of Bach's Chorale Preludes for a soloist with piano, for the texture of the polyphony is thereby ruined; one part, even if it be the chorale tune, acquires an illegitimate predominance. But the music is so wonderful, and the performance so sensitive, that this is a record that should not be missed. A record of an Oboe Concerto by Corelli, played by Evelyn Rothwell with the Halle Orchestra conducted by Barbirolli (H.M.V.) is also presumably a transcription, though the label offers no information on this point. This is elegant and noble music, rather colourlessly played. I know Corelli is a 'classical' composer; but he belongs to the age of the classical baroque. I do not believe that his music should sound emasculated, even though it doesn't call for the vehemence of a Rosenmuller. However, in the absence of other adequate Corelli recordings, this one is worth having. It is inoffensive, which is more than can be said of Barbirolli's Wagnerian full orchestra version of Purcell of some years back.

H.M.V. also give us Beecham's performance of Berlioz's *Le Corsaire* Overture. If not one of Berlioz's more important pieces, this is a representative one, and performance and recording are superb. It reveals once more the subtlety and originality of Berlioz's linear thinking. Another fine single H.M.V. record is of the duet

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Appresti, Lucia, from Donizetti's *Lucia,* sung by Carosio and Tagliabue, with the Royal Opera House Orchestra, conducted by Franco Patanè. I don't know how the singing compares with that of the great days, but it seems to me to give a convincing notion of the pure melodic line of the last days of Italian bel canto, before the tradition was vulgarized. Donizetti is a delightful composer, whatever the deficiencies of his harmonic sense; and if his operas, like Bellini's, are supposed on theatrical grounds to be mostly unperformable, we can do with many more recorded examples of this clearly lyrical art.

Ravel's Introduction and Allegro for Harp, String Quartet, Flute and Clarinet is given, on Columbia, a beautiful performance by John Cockerill and a distinguished body of soloists. The recording is of exceptional clarity, and the work as seductive as ever.

The nineteenth-century works include Schubert's A minor Quartet, Op. 29, played by the Philharmonia Quartet (Columbia); Dvorak's Third Symphony played by the City of Birmingham Orchestra under George Weldon (Columbia); Beethoven's Eighth, played by the Vienna Philharmonic under Herbert von Karajan (Columbia); the Schumann Piano Concerto played by Claudio Arrau with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra conducted by Karl Kreuger; and Tchaikowsky's Fifth, played by the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Paul Kletzki. I believe this is the only extant recording of the beautiful early Schubert work; the performance is sensitive, though not very successful in catching the Viennese idiom. This is also the only recorded version of the Dvorak Symphony, and it is a good one, with clean and rhythmic playing, richly recorded. The new recording of Beethoven's Eighth hardly justifies itself; and the characteristically volatile playing of the phenomenal Arrau in the Schumann Concerto is marred by the American recording, which is very loud. Not rich or resonant; just Loud. By far the best of these symphonic recordings is the new issue of Tchaikowsky No. Five. This is so admirable that one welcomes even another version of this still vigorously ramping war-horse. The performance secures exactly the right balance between the rhetorical emotionalism commonly found in performances of this music, and the self-consciously 'objective' ballet-like style favoured by Constant Lambert. Kletzki makes the music sound like splendid ballet music, without playing the climaxes as though he didn't believe in them. Possibly Tchaikowsky himself didn't, for he was a very intelligent man; nonetheless if you play this music at all you must play it with conviction. Here the recording is as ripe as the music, and it would be an arid spirit that did not join in the protracted self-congratulatory huzzahs with which the work terminates.

W.H.M.

SCRUTINY is published by the Editors, Downing College, Cambridge; distributed by Deighton, Bell & Co., Ltd., Trinity Street, Cambridge; and printed by S. G. Marshall & Son, Round Church Street, Cambridge, England.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED